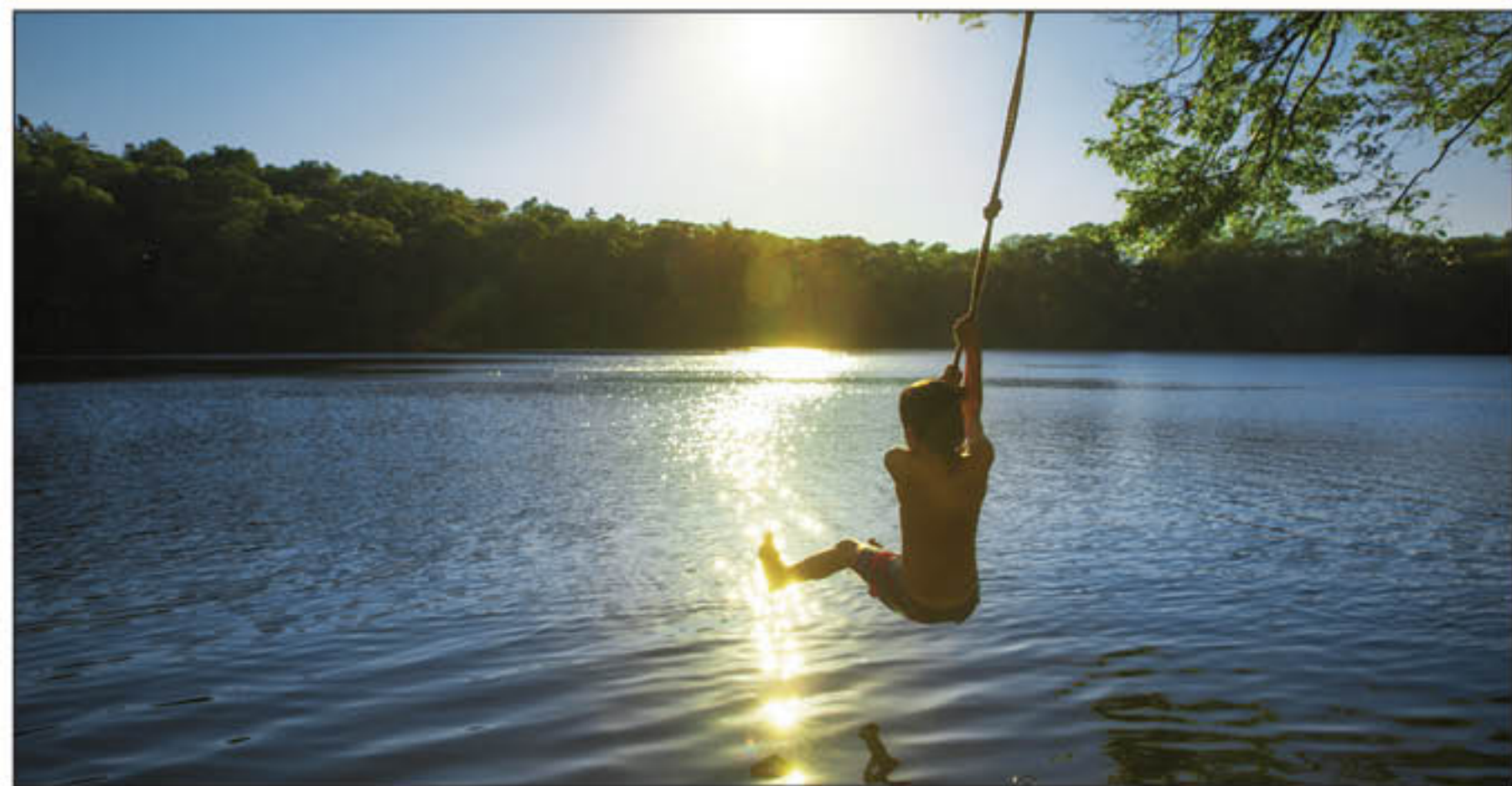


BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Obedient Heart Fellowship

Doomed to Failure?

By Jim Huskins
McDowell County

Schiele Scout Reservation was a magical part of my adolescence. I loved scouting. Lake Lanier felt like an exotic location. Every day at camp was packed with adventure and discovery. One of those discoveries changed my life.

I was a weak swimmer. When I was twelve and my first trip to scout camp approached, I was terrified. We would spend part of each day in the lake, and I did not want the guys in Troop 205 to see that I could barely swim.

Amazingly, I enjoyed twice-daily swimming sessions, and my skills rapidly improved. Two high-school-age instructors took an interest in me and patiently taught me fundamentals. We arrived Sunday, and by Tuesday my instructors were encouraging me to try the "mile swim" on Friday. It was the most absurd idea I could imagine.

Nonetheless, I was one of more than a hundred who hit the lake Friday afternoon for three laps around the inlet. Instructors in rowboats served as lifeguards. One of "my" guys was always near me. Several swimmers became exhausted and were pulled out. I was more afraid of failing than I was of drowning. Long after everyone else finished, one tall twelve-year-old finally made it to shore. Beside him was a boat carrying a swimming instructor who made the impossible real.

It could have been a cruel joke. Boys that age can find pleasure in seeing younger kids fail. I was fortunate to find two who wanted me to succeed. If I could swim a mile, I could face other fears without blinking.

Caring teachers and loving parents want those under their care to succeed. Only the perverse place their charges in impossible situations, and yet, popular "Christian" doctrine teaches that God Almighty maliciously placed His chosen people in circumstances where they could not do what He asked. Most Christians believe and teach that when He gave His instructions for living in the first five books of the Bible—the Torah—He was setting up His own children for failure. Can that be true?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" Did God give the Torah so he could laugh at His children's failure, or was he merely telling us how he wants us to live? The Hebrew word Torah means "instructions." It does not mean "law" in the way that we use law. Time and again the Bible teaches that Torah is perfect and just and freeing and delightful. More importantly, the Bible teaches that Torah is possible. Deuteronomy 30:11 says that Torah: "Is not too hard for you, neither is it far off." 1 John 5:3 says: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

Modern Christians are taught that God's instructions for living are a burden, that Jesus excused His disciples from following them, and that when Messiah died, God abandoned the people and promises and prophecies He had endorsed



since the time of Abraham and before. The widespread notion of "Replacement Theology" says that God set impossible standards for His own children so that we would have no option but failure. Did The Almighty leave his chosen people floundering in the lake of life for eighteen hundred years with no hope of pleasing Him? When Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah and the Prophets?" was He was actually saying, "I came to abolish the Torah and the Prophets."

Replacement theology makes a mockery of every promise that God made to Adam, to the Patriarchs, to Moses, to David and others. It also makes gibberish of hundreds of prophetic passages which state plainly that Israel will be God's chosen people forever. Jeremiah 31:35-37 says that as long as the sun and moon and stars keep shining and until the heavens and the foundations of the earth are fully explored, the nation of Israel will always be His people. I was taught that the church is now spiritual Israel, but every time the New Testament uses the name "Israel," it is referring to the blood descendants of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. What we know as the "church" did not replace Israel in God's plan.

The Son of God did not live a perfect life and die a substitutionary death so that He could start a new religion. He did those things to take away our sin and release us from the death penalty we owe. We all have broken the covenant established at Sinai. His sacrifice makes possible our adoption into His family. We owe everything we are and have and will be to Jesus, and His expectation of us is clearly stated. John 14:15-16 says that if we love Him, we will keep his Torah, and then He will send the Comforter to assist us in living holy lives.

The "burden of the law" referred to by Jesus, Peter, Paul and others in the New Testament is not God's instructions for living. That "burden" is the thousands of regulations added to the Torah by humans. Psalm 119 tells the true nature of Torah. Rather than being a burden, God's instructions are a delight and a direct channel to His abundant blessings. He knew that this life is made up of many "mile-swim" challenges, and He wanted us to know how to stay on top and keep moving forward.

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping his commandments. We meet each Sabbath—Seventh Day—at Abba's House, 72 South Main Street in Marion. 10:00 A.M. 828-460-7913

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.





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BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

Publisher/Co-editor - Brian Barrier
828-413-0506
brianb@brcnews.com
Office Manager/Co-editor - Cathy Pritchard
828-765-6800
cathyp@brcnews.com
Sales:
Brian Barrier
828-413-0506
brianb@brcnews.com
Church Directory:
Brian Barrier
828-765-6800
brianb@brcnews.com

Distribution:
Deborah Slagle
Doug Braswell
Amanda Silver
Sherri Hutchins
Sid Houk
Graphic Design / Layout
Lynn Yaccarino
lynn@brcnews.com
Blue Ridge Christian News
261 Oak Ave.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Office - 828-765-6800
Fax - 828-766-9157
info@brcnews.com

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.bridgewnc.org

Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

Sunday Service 10:30AM
Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F
9:00AM-3:00PM

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280 Chapel St.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-6590
www.berrychapelbaptist.com

Pastor - Steve Williams

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 11:00 AM
Sunday Evening Care Meal/
Ministry - 5:30 PM
Wednesday Evening
Service 7:00 PM

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Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-584-8212

Pastor - Steve Bietz

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:30 am
Sabbath Worship - 11:00 am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday
Praise, Prayer & Proclaim -
7:00 pm
www.morgantonsda.org

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Morganton, NC 28755
(828)-675-9284
www.fccn.org
www.fccradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship Service - 10:45 am
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00pm
"The steps of a good man are
ordered by the Lord:
And he delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:23

Altapass Baptist Church

3631 Altapass Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-0660
altapassbaptistchurch@ccvn.com
www.altapassbaptistchurch.org

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

Sunday School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Sunday Evening - 7:00pm
Sunday Youth Program - 7:00pm
1st & 3rd Sunday
(Conductors for Christ ages 5-11)
2nd & 4th Sunday
(Teen Discovery ages 12-18)
Wednesday - 7:00pm

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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

793 Old NC 226 Hwy
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828-765-4620
www.grassycreekbc.org

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Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 7:00pm
Seekers (young adults) 7:00pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
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West Burnsville Baptist Church

222 West Burnsville Church Rd.
Burnsville, NC 28714
(828)-682-3990

Pastor: Terry Long

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Morning Service: 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service: 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m.

Church vision: Glorifying God through
knowing, growing, going, to build the church
and impact the world.

Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-2357

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. Luke A. Lane

8:30am - Early Worship
9:45am - Sunday School
11:00am - Worship
6:00pm - Evening Worship

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6919
www.plumtreepresbyterian.org

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.org

Sunday School 9:45 am
Worship Service 11:00 am
Life Groups Tuesday-Thursday evenings, 7:00 pm
Fusion Youth Wednesday's, 6:30 pm
Healing Services 2nd Sunday of each month, 6:30 pm

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that
will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you
ask in my name.

Bear Creek Baptist Church

327 Bear Creek Road
Bakersville, NC 28705
www.bearcreekbaptist.com

Reverend Bruce Cannon

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 10:45 AM
Discipleship 6:00 PM
Evening Worship 6:45 PM
Wednesday Worship 7:30 PM

**"For God so loved the world, he
gave his only Son..."**

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
Morganton, NC
828-475-2040

Pastor Barry Mahorney

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study-10:00am
Sabbath Worship - 11:30am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday - Praise, Prayer &
Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greathopesda.com

Pine Branch Baptist Church

48 Church Road
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Phone: (828) 765-9101
www.pinebranchbaptist.net

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

Sunday School • 9:45-10:40am
Worship Service • 10:45am
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm

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Spruce Pine, NC 28777
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Wednesday Faith Formation
6:00 pm
Food Pantry Wed. 1:00-
4:00pm

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbc.com
www.splfbc.blogspot.com

**Dr. Rocky Branch
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Sunday Worship - 8:30 and 11:00 am
Sunday Evening - 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm

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11090 Hwy. 226 South
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.sprucepineumc.org
spumc3@bellsouth.net
828-765-7446

Pastor Rev. Jeremy Troxler

Sunday School - 10:00am
Sunday Worship - 11:00am
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The mission of Spruce Pine United
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Gas! Gas! Gas!
Or Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!

By Brian Barrier
Burke County



“Gas, Gas, Gas”! For any of you that have served in the military, those may be very familiar words. For those of you that have not served, I will explain. My dreadful experience with those words first happened during basic training in the United States Army at Fort Jackson, South Carolina located in the town of Columbia. The year was 1990 and I had just graduated high school at the ripe old age of 18. I suppose it must have been in the upper 90’s that sweltering summer day in July when we were marched down to a small shack right after a big lunch which we scarfed down in less than 5 minutes.

As you have probably heard, everything in the military is completely structured and during the initial eight weeks called “basic training” everything is meant to be stressful, so you learn to execute all tasks while facing any and every situation, especially combat. We had completed the instructional training and practical application training on the importance of a gas mask. These masks are meant as complete protection from most chemical and biological agents that might be deployed against a soldier during combat. When any soldier knows or suspects there has been a gas attack, they are trained to immediately make a signal and yell out “gas, gas, gas”! Once they have learned the proper use and determined to be proficient in properly donning their gas mask, the next step is to go into the gas chamber and use the mask in a real-world environment. The goal is to ensure every soldier that they can have complete FAITH in their mask when it is needed.

In order to accomplish the last step of training, a group of soldiers are lined up inside a foggy and dark room filled with CS gas with their mask on. CS is an extremely powerful form of tear gas and once it touches your skin will cause a severe burning effect. If you breathe in the gas, you suddenly are not able to take another breath especially if it is ingested in concentrated amounts, like during this training. While your mask is on, you can breathe normally and carry on as usual. Then, one at a time, each soldier is required to remove their mask and then answer a series of questions which eventually causes them to inhale the CS gas. I can’t even begin to explain the terror that comes over you when suddenly you have no ability to breathe and fluids are pouring out of every part of your body. I don’t mean dripping, I mean POURING! Your eyes are watering, fluid flowing out of your nose and mouth and you are gripped with the fear of not being able to breathe. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind once they leave the gas chamber that the gas mask will save your life.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:10-18 (NKJV)

You see, just as a soldier endures many months and even years of intense training in order to learn how to use each piece of equipment properly, we must learn to use the equipment God has left for us while we are here on earth. It isn’t easy and it does take work but the consequences of our actions or inactions are eternal! Let’s not call out “Gas, gas gas” but let’s call out to a lost and dying world, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus”!

Brian Barrier is a life-long resident of Burke County, U.S. Army Veteran, a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.

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Walnut Grove Church

BIBLE SCHOOL

By Joyce (Joy) Harwood Baldwin

*I sit here in my rocking chair
In the pleasant evening light
Thinking of the best times
My days were jolly and bright.*

*I used to love to walk the path
To Bible School each day
We'd get together with old friends
To learn and grow and play.*

*My favorite cookies and Kool Aid
On a pretty table were spread
Then we sang a lovely song
Pleased the teacher as she led.*

*We talked aloud and laughed a lot
In plays with different scenes
Making crafts with things from home
Scrapbooks candles vases and rings.*

*Sometimes I pause beside my bed
Admire a green straw basket I hold
It brings to me much pleasure
So many stories to be told.*



Joy is a resident of Madison County, where she now lives with her husband, Danny Joe Baldwin. She is currently a member of Mt Zion Baptist church in Marshall, NC. As a previous member, she calls Forks of Ivy Missionary Baptist Church in Weaverville, "home away from home". She is currently singing with the Gospel Group "Jonah's Voice" out of Mars Hill, NC. Her latest song "Homecoming" will soon be heard by many.

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And find us on Facebook**

Stay Clean

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County



One of the greatest Kings of Israel was Hezekiah. When he came to power the country was in shambles. His father, Ahaz, had allowed the country to be defeated militarily, economically, and spiritually. He even sacrificed his own small children by fire, to the false god, Molech. Hezekiah, however, had the heart of David, totally devoted to the Lord. His first job was to clean up the Temple, which had been polluted.

2 Chron. 29:4 He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary: 6 Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him.

It seems this need for a cleansing process repeats itself not only in history, but we see examples of it in the animal kingdom.

Rats and mice, even though we think of them as dirty, spend most of their waking hours grooming themselves and are surprisingly clean. If you watch your household cat or dog, you will see that they too spend a lot of time just staying clean. The gecko lizards in the desert in the SW part of our country are interesting because they don't have eyelids (despite the GEICO commercials). Yet they live in a place with lots of dirt and sand. So how do they stay clean? God gave them a really long tongue which they actually use to clean their eyes.

So, what can we learn from the animals? We too should have an innate desire to be clean.

Yet when it comes to the heart of man, we allow corruption and pollution to affect us internally (much like the Temple above). Therefore, our cleansing needs to be carried out daily. How? If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

How often should we do this? Just think of your cat and do it every day. We can't avoid the pollution of this world that sticks to us daily. But we can still stay clean by daily (or even moment by moment when prompted by the Holy Spirit) confessing our sins before the Lord. Think of it as that nice feeling you get after taking a refreshing cool shower after a hot sticky August day.

He's waiting to hear from you.

Selah, (think about it)

(Inspired by a devotional Footsteps of the Flock, Jon Courson p. 208)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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Dr. Dobson's Visit to the Border

By Dr. James Dobson

Several weeks ago, I was invited by White House staff to visit our southern border at McAllen, Texas, where federal agents are struggling to deal with a massive influx of poor and destitute human beings. They come in never-ending waves. Please believe me when I tell you that the media and leftist politicians have not been truthful about what is going on there. It is a human tragedy.

I promised the exhausted U.S. Custom and Border Patrol agents that I would go home and tell as many people as possible what I had seen "up close and personal." Today, I am attempting to fulfill that commitment.

Approximately 5,500 people show up every day in districts organized along our southern U.S. border. McAllen is the site of only one of them, but it is the busiest and most besieged. The "refugees" arrive exhausted and ragged from walking hundreds of miles. Among them are large numbers of children, many of whom are unaccompanied by a caring adult. Last year, 382,000 aliens were apprehended for illegally crossing into this country and almost 100,000 of them were minors. Some of the kids have been abused along the way. Many of them carry lice, scabies or other diseases. Currently, the facility I visited is experiencing a flu epidemic, and there are no additional beds on which to lie. Some of the women have been raped. More than 70 people of all ages are sent to local hospitals daily along the southern border. Doctors and medical staff are overwhelmed by their patient load. Remember that word, "overwhelmed." It describes every aspect of the effort to deal with the situation there.

The most heart-wrenching experience occurred during our tour of the holding area. It is a huge gym-like building consisting of dozens of fenced-in areas. Each one is crowded with detainees standing or sitting shoulder-to-shoulder on benches. They stared out at us with plaintive eyes.

I noticed that almost none of them were talking to each other. The children looked traumatized and frightened. Tears flooded my eyes as I stood before them. They had no toys or dolls, except for a few items bought by compassionate border patrol agents. One tiny little girl clutched something that resembled a doll bought for her by an agent. There are few provisions made to accommodate the children. The week before we were there, a delegation of agents went to meet with members of Congress and begged them for additional money to buy Pampers, toothbrushes, and other necessities. They were turned down flat. These meager supplies must be purchased with the border patrol budget, which is stretched to the limit.

I then walked up to a fenced area holding many skinny young men. An agent standing beside me asked if I would like to speak to them. He offered to translate for me, to which I replied, "Please tell them that God loves them." Then I said, "Now tell them that I love them, too." They smiled and waved timidly.

My heart aches for these poor people. Lest I be misunderstood, let me make clear that I am among the majority of Americans who want the border to be closed to those who attempt to enter illegally. There must be a better solution than this. I have wondered, with you, why the authorities don't just deny these refugees access to this nation. Can't we just send them back to their places of origin? The answer I received was "No," for reasons I will explain.

Only 10 percent of the detainees are Mexicans. This year alone, people have come to our southern border from 127 countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, India, China, Palestine, Albania, San Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and other nations around the world. They speak their native tongues, which means they can't be understood by each other or the staff. What are we to do with them? The Mexican government will not take them back, and there is no place to send them. Our current laws do not permit us to repatriate them to their country of origin. This is a disaster with no solution or projected conclusion.

Let me tell you how these desperate people come to be our responsibility. They are the lowest rung in many societies. They sell their shanties and any other possessions to scrape together \$3,500 to \$10,000 to pay "coyotes" to guide them. I don't know what happens to those who can't meet this demand. Apparently, most manage to pay the fee and arrive penniless and profoundly needy. I was told that some of the vulnerable children are "recycled" repeatedly to help men gain entry to this country. An unknown number of these men are hardened criminals and drug runners, and they are difficult to identify. Most make their way across the border.

Here's something else you should know. I have been under the impression that these would-be immigrants try to cross the Rio Grande River and outrun or evade the agents. That is not true of most. They come in large groups, from 100 to 400 people at a time. As I write this letter, a record 1,200 people arrived together at El Paso. The refugees quickly give themselves up to agents. That is why they have made this journey. They know they will be fed, medicated, and treated humanely, even if they are in holding areas while they are in our custody. Then they will be released on American soil. This is the system set up by a liberal Congress and judges. It is a well-known fact that President Obama's administration established many of these unworkable policies, and Congress is steadfastly unwilling to change them. Every effort at reform has been overridden or ignored. It is set in stone. Democrats want massive numbers of immigrants who will someday become voters. Some Republicans support the policies because they want cheap labor for agricultural purposes. The border could be fixed, but there are very few in authority who seem to care.

Getting back to my story, our group of national faith leaders and humanitarian organizations was taken to a grassy park underneath the international bridges where the "coyotes" bring the refugees. We stood 50 feet away from them and watched as about 200 people sat on the ground. Then buses arrived to transport them to Border Control. Agents must work fast because another group will be showing up soon, and then another and another. The would-be immigrants are taken to the center and given cursory medical exams. Then they are segregated by



sex and age and placed in the fenced-in areas to be held for the next 20 days until they are processed and given a Notice to Appear. If that sounds inhumane, what would you or I do? There is simply no other place to "house" them.

Mismanagement of the border has a long history. A federal judge years ago issued a ruling called the Flores Settlement Agreement. It is still the source of many problems. It requires that any unaccompanied alien child must be released within 72 hours. This is now the law of the land, and poor people around the world know it. A single male typically seeks to find a child and a woman to help him "game the system." Clearly, many of these are "fake families," but there is no documentation in Pakistani or Bangladesh to challenge their claims. Lawyers at home have told them to claim that they are fleeing from oppression or seeking asylum. They are allowed to plead their cases to judges, but there are too few of them to keep up with the volume. These people are given a court case and released. The vast majority are never seen again. Most then become "anchor babies" who are citizens with rights to bring members of their families. Others are given transportation to an American city where they disappear into the culture.

In addition to this influx of people from places around the world steeped in poverty and despair, Senator Chuck Schumer authored and helped pass a "lottery" system, whereby winners are brought to the United States. They become permanent residents, who then begin bringing their families to our shores. Thank you, Senator.

Ten years ago, 90 percent of illegals apprehended at the border were single males, mainly from Mexico. Now, more than 50 percent show up with babies and children, and 90 percent of them are from countries other than Mexico with 64 percent being family units or unaccompanied alien children. Together, they claim to be "families" and within three weeks, they will be home free in America. Is there any doubt why there have been more than half a million illegal immigrants this year alone?

Before I conclude, I must tell you about the agents who have to deal with this chaos. They are compassionate men and women, sworn to uphold federal law and protect our borders.

They obviously care about the detainees, and I respect them highly. They work tirelessly feeding people three times a day and providing clean clothing. They must also maintain the portable toilets in the cells. It is a never-ending task. There are only two large showers in the facility, one for males, the other for females. Their capacity is for only 20 people at a time, which is insufficient.

The border patrol agents administer this program, but most of them didn't sign up to be caregivers. Agents were trained to patrol the border and apprehend drug runners, traffickers, smugglers, murderers, and every kind of lawbreaker. This is very dangerous work. But, please understand this: the border patrol agents are so busy caring for refugees seeking entry to the United States that they have very little time to police the borders. It is so porous that huge quantities of contraband, including all kinds of narcotics, flow into this country every day. Then it is transported northward to America's cities to be consumed by adolescents and millennials. Lawless gangs, such as MS-13, are also pouring into the culture, making violence for inner cities a way of life.

There is one more aspect to the work of the agents that you should know. They are openly hated by citizens who resent the work they do. They are routinely vilified and mocked and demonized. Their families are also subjected to ridicule. These agents need our appreciation and prayers. They have one of the most thankless jobs in America.

The situation I have described is the reason President Donald Trump's border wall is so urgently needed. He seems to be the only leader in America who comprehends this tragedy and is willing to address it. Those who oppose him do everything they can to impede his effort. That is why I went to the border to see the situation for myself. I came away with an array of intense emotions. First, I was profoundly grieved over the misery of thousands of people. Second, I felt a deep appreciation for those who are doing their best to help in an impossible circumstance. Third, and frankly, I was angry at the political fat cats who have deliberately allowed this chaos to occur for political or financial gain. They, and their friends in the fake media have told the American people that there is no crisis at the border! Shame on them all.

What I've told you is only a glimpse of what is occurring on the nation's border. I don't know what it will take to change the circumstances. I can only report that without an overhaul of the law and the allocation of resources, millions of illegal immigrants will continue flooding to this great land from around the world. Many of them have no marketable skills. They are illiterate and unhealthy. Some are violent criminals. Their numbers will soon overwhelm the culture as we have known it, and it could bankrupt the nation. America has been a wonderfully generous and caring country since its founding. That is our Christian nature. But in this instance, we have met a worldwide wave of poverty that will take us down if we don't deal with it. And it won't take long for the inevitable consequences to happen.

Thanks for letting me set the record straight.

James Dobson, Jr. is an American evangelical Christian author, psychologist, and founder in 1977 of Focus on the Family

High Country Prison Ministry

By Jody Griffin
Avery and Mitchell County



*Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.*

Returning home from duty at Fort Bragg years ago I had a most enlightening experience. (Pun intended!) Driving up I-95 with my thoughts full of food, upcoming appointments, food, sermons and food (just keeping it real!) I noted what appeared to be an accident scene ahead. And for whatever reason traffic was being forced off the exit to a detour. (Btw: This was BC, Before Cellphones! ☺)

The problem was that the detour's route was completely unmarked. My amazing navigational senses immediately leaped into action by telling me what the best course of action would be... (Are you ready for this?) ...to follow the car in front of me! After all, this seemed to be the darkest, dreariest, least marked road I had ever traveled in North Carolina.

Following them for some time, I began to imagine that this might turn out to be a surprising short cut home that I was about to discover. What a joy it would be to happen upon a way to save time and money and find oneself closer to food! (I mean, Home!)

By now you've probably guessed what happened to my little travel fantasy. It faded quickly away when finally, a road sign that told me I was just a few (VERY FEW!) miles away from where I was when I entered the detour!

Sounds a lot like life doesn't it? Unexpected detours abound and we are often left searching. The easy thing to do is fall in line with those around us and just keep on trucking.

But the right thing to do, the BEST thing to do, is to consult life's roadmap (Spell that B-I-B-L-E!) and trust God to lead us home. God's Word is God's Way of leading us. The only question is if we will follow.

Incarceration is a detour for many who are now longing to get back on a path towards hope and home. Their detour can feel too long or complicated to endure. But I thank God every day for the incredible privilege to minister amongst those who have detoured and now face the consequences and challenges in finding their way back. I get to assist them in getting their hands on and their hearts into the Truth of the Scriptures.

The Community Funded Chaplains in North Carolina are exactly that, Chaplains in prisons whose positions are funded through the generous giving of the community. The unique challenge for our area is that there are two, yes TWO correctional facilities within one-half mile of each other. When I arrived at AMCI (Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution) in 2015 I learned that each prison had a Community Funded Chaplain who serves over 800 offenders PLUS staff at their respective locations. That means that between the two of us, we serve as ministers to well over 2,000 people every single day. We preach, teach and counsel. We baptize and disciple. We encourage, enlighten and exhort. We are present for offenders and staff who have experienced deaths in their families and support them in their grief. We provide religious support across faith and denominational boundaries. Most importantly, we do all of these things as servants of God. As Chaplains we are not competitors, we are co-laborers. It is important to note that each of us is responsible for soliciting the financial and spiritual support necessary to do the work within our respective institutions.

Without your support, the work of the Chaplains could cease in our area. The incarcerated and the staff that oversee them would be burdened.

Thank you for your faithful support of our ministries!

Please, prayerfully consider supporting the ministry of your Community Funded Chaplains. Our work depends on the generosity of individuals, churches, civic groups and everyone who gives through the charitable organizations that sponsor us! Thank you and God Bless You for making ministry to those in prison possible in our community!

High Country Prison Ministry:
Chaplain Jody Griffin
PO Box 161
Crossnore, NC 28681
Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution

Blue Ridge Prison Ministry:
Chaplain Don Stafford
278 Chapel Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Mountain View Correctional Institution

Jody Griffin is pastor of Central Baptist Church in Spruce Pine and Community Funded Chaplain at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution.

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Life Lessons

By Doug Harrell
Mitchell County

Joy comes in the morning, especially if we take time in our secret place to spend time with our Savior. All that remains of yesterday are the memories. Those memories can be good or bad, depending on the situations. Yesterday was the one-year anniversary of my mother's death and some of my memories revolve around that this morning.

Our memories do tend to shape our future and that can be good or bad, depending to a large degree on what we let our minds dwell on in those memories. We can focus on the failures, the hurts, the disappointments or we can focus on the bright spots. Yes, we always have both of these memories, but we must take time to filter them out. If you are old enough you will remember old flour sifters of years gone by. You poured the flour in the sifter and turned the little handle to sift out the chaff or hulls that were left from the milling. We all have hulls of sadness left from yesterday that we need to sift out and throw into the garbage, not use it to cook with but to discard it.

So many times, we spend all our thought time thinking about the hulls and hurts, the disappointments rather than the flour that creates the dough, the dough that makes the bread of life worthwhile. Guard your mind and your memories, cleanse your mind of the discouragements of yesterday and focus on the lilies of the day that you had yesterday, and your today will tend to be much brighter. Psalms 63:1-7

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Take time each day to give thanks for the little things, the memories that are pleasant, ask God to help you erase the pain of the hurts from yesterday and to look forward to the blessings of today. Let your eyes, mind, and focus be on this, the day that the Lord hath made and rejoice in the path in front of you each day, forgetting the hurts and failures that are behind. Psalms 63:1-7 KJV

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County. Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc, a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. Mark 11:24



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The Coming of Persecution for Christian Americans

By Rev. Mark Creech



This week the Washington Examiner reported that Pastor Andrew Brunson said he was "astounded at the speed with which the U.S. is imploding" and that he predicts persecution of Christians will follow.

Brunson is the evangelical Presbyterian missionary to Turkey, who spent two years in a Turkish prison. He was falsely accused of being part of a failed coup attempt against that country's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The charges against Brunson resulting in his unjust imprisonment triggered a war of words and diplomatic struggles between Turkey and the U.S. Government.

North Carolina U.S. Senator Thom Tillis visited Brunson in prison and diligently worked and advocated for the missionary's release from prison.

Since Brunson was not only an American citizen but a North Carolinian, the Christian Action League initiated and lobbied for a resolution from the North Carolina House and a Senatorial statement from the state Senate, calling on Turkish officials to free Brunson. The House passed the resolution unanimously, and 48 out of 50 Senate members signed the Senatorial statement. (Currently, the North Carolina Senate does not adopt resolutions, but only Senatorial statements.)

Brunson made his remarks about the coming of persecution for American Christians during an interview at the Western Conservative Summit, held every year by the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University.

According to the Examiner Brunson said:

"First of all, I think it's coming to the U.S. that there will be persecution. I was isolated for a few years, and coming back to the states was almost like coming back to a different country in many ways. And I'm astounded at the speed with which, I think, the U.S. is imploding."

"There is any number of issues where it seems that it's no longer enough for a person of faith to get along with, or to serve, or to treat well someone they disagree with. And I think that the political business, media, celebrity class, and also academia, it seems that there's much more of a demand that people approve of, that they validate, that they celebrate things that they actually disagree with."

"Persecution is nothing new....The thing is, that we in the West have not experienced [persecution] very much. It's very unusual for a Westerner to be arrested for his faith. So we haven't experienced it, but I think we are going to. I think it's coming to this country."

One might argue that persecution is now alive and well in America with the purging of Christianity from the government, the muzzling of state officials, employees, and appointees who are Christian, the public attacks on churches and Christian businesses, the media and Hollywood's disparaging of anything Christian in almost every film they make. The kind of persecution Andrew Brunson endured in Turkey hasn't arrived yet. Nevertheless, as he suggests, it appears as though it might be right around the corner.

As frightening as that prospect may seem, and no one in their right mind desires it, persecution could have a positive effect on true religion.

For example, Bishop Polycarp, an older man at the time, was put to death for his faith in Smyrna in the year 167. He had tried very hard to escape arrest but was eventually tracked down. When apprehended, he was ordered to curse Christ.

Polycarp replied:

"Six and eighty years have I served him, and he has done me nothing except good. How then can I curse my Lord and Savior?"

At that profession, his abductors sentenced him to death. Wood was gathered and piled in an open square, and the white-haired old man was made to mount the large heap. But when they sought to fasten him to the stake, he told them:

"No, leave me thus. He who has strengthened me to encounter the flames will give me the power also to stand firm at the stake!"

And in this manner, Polycarp suffered a martyr's death.

Persecution has a way of making a genuine follower of Jesus Christ, an individual of sturdy and profound faith.

Other Christians died as Polycarp did during the 2nd Century, and their heroism had a positive outcome in making Christians of that time nobler, purer, and vigorous in their walk with God. The persecuted became, as Tertullian said, "a fan which cleanses the Lord's threshing-floor."

Moreover, Christianity began to sweep the land.

To quote Tertullian again:

"We conquer in dying; we go forth triumphant at the very moment we seemed subdued....The oftener we are mown down, the more do we grow in number. The blood of Christians is the seed of the Church!"

Someone once wisely said, "Be careful about what you pray; you just might get it." Quite some time now, many faithful Christians have been praying earnestly for revival in the church and spiritual awakening to sweep America.

The answer to such prayers may be on its way and coming via an unexpected means – persecution.

Reverend Dr. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at rev.markcreech@christianactionleague.org or 919-787-0606



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No Regrets Family - Good Girls Finish First

By Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

This article is for all those young girls out there who choose purity over popularity and peer pressure. For all those courageous young ladies who have said yes to "true love waits". You do finish first because you have chosen to honor God in your life and in your conduct. Praise God for godly young women who enter marriage chaste and pure.

The world may not celebrate your chastity, your peers may not admire you, the boys may not pay you a lot of attention, but who cares. At the end of the day, you have "no regrets". You have done things the right way and God will honor you.

I never realized how much pressure was placed on young girls. Promiscuous behavior in social media, movies, television shows, and among peers is celebrated and even considered the norm. There are so many couples who live together these days it is ridiculous. I get embarrassed to go to the mall or somewhere to eat with my wife and see some girl half-dressed. A father on Facebook recently embarrassed his daughter by wearing some short shorts. He said if you (his daughter) can go out in public dressed like that then so can I.

I thank the Lord for young ladies who dress modestly and care how they look in front of others. The modest dress says I respect myself and I am confident in who I am. That is why you finish first because your confidence and identity are not found in what others think of you.

Good girls finish first because they love the Lord more than they love the world. Let me tell you God has great things in store for you. Good girls finish first because they do not have a lot of skeletons in the closet that come back to haunt them later in life or things they apologize for later in life. Good girls finish first because they can look in a mirror and having nothing to be ashamed of and everything to be proud of.


I realize this article may not be read by the young ladies for whom it is written. But parent, grandparent, Sunday school teacher, you can encourage and applaud the young lady who chooses purity. You can tell them that they are the true heroes and role models for all young ladies. You can tell them that more people are paying attention to them and some would give all to be who they are.

Dads, you can praise your daughter for her modest dress and godly character. You can show her from a young age how a man should treat a woman with respect. You can, as many fathers have done, take your daughter out on a date and bless her with a purity ring or necklace that will remind her of her commitment to chastity. Dads, you play a vital role in the attitudes and actions of your daughter.

It was necessary that I write this article to commend, celebrate, and praise all young ladies who love the Lord and choose chastity. The Bible says, "who can find a virtuous wife, for her worth is far above rubies." This wife is honored because she was a good girl, and in her years of being single, she chose to honor God in purity. "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised."

Good Girls finish first because God has promised. Psalm 84:11 (KJV 1900)
No good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Pastor Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-385-0213, snowhillbaptist@gmail.com, or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com.



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The Roller Coaster Ride of Life! - 2 Corinthians 4: 1-10

By Dr. Jack Hodges
Burke County



"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we don't faint. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Even if our Good News is veiled, it is veiled in those who perish; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them. For we don't preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake; seeing it is God who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side, yet not crushed; perplexed, yet not to despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed; always carrying in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

It is hard to believe that it has been 25 years since we first saw the 1994 movie, *Forest Gump*. So much has happened in each of our lives and in the world in those 25 short years. Do you remember how the movie started out? It opened with a scene showing a feather floating down and around, being whisked about by the wind of a passing car or a sudden gust of wind, finally coming to rest on the muddy old shoes of a man sitting patiently on a bench, seemingly waiting for a bus. Forest Gump, who is all decked out in a white suit, reaches down, takes the feather, opens his old suitcase, reaches inside, takes out a book and places the feather inside the book. Then, he closes the book and the suitcase. A bus comes and goes. Forest seems oblivious and a bit bewildered. A lady in a nurse's outfit sits down beside Forest on the bench, herself clearly there for one purpose, to catch a bus home from a long day's work. Forest opens a box of chocolates and asks the lady if she would like one. She declines, showing a bit of apprehension about what kind of fellow she has sat next to. "I could eat about a million and a half of these," exclaims Forest Gump. He continues, "My mamma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates.' You never know what you're gonna get."

Although I see the point, life is not like a box of chocolates. That's too tame, too passive, and too delicious. For me, life is like a roller coaster ride. Yep, life is like a roller coaster ride—with highs, lows, twists, and turns. Like "Bubba" says about shrimp in the movie, "You've got your shrimp kabobs, shrimp creole, shrimp gumbo, pan-fried, deep-fried, stir-fried. There's pineapple shrimp, lemon shrimp, coconut shrimp, pepper shrimp, shrimp soup, shrimp stew, shrimp salad, shrimp and potatoes, shrimp burger, shrimp sandwich..."

Well, in the world of thrill rides, you've got your wooden coasters, steel coasters, your inverted coasters, your suspended coasters, and your impulse and your strata-coasters. You're hanging, suspended, sitting, laying down, and/or strapped in. The old wooden coasters take you on one hill after another, hurling you upwards toward the sky and then the bottom falls out leaving your stomach back at the crest of the hill while the rest of your body is free-falling towards the earth, anticipating a disastrous impact—only to find yourself suddenly twisting and turning, flying and falling again and again. Dizziness and disorientation are often the result. The faint of heart holds on for dear life. Thrill-seekers throw their hands in the air and allow their bodies to be tossed about like a wet rag.

The newer steel coasters "glide" along on a steel tube with a series of wheels that surround the tube, the only thing that prevents these missiles from flying off the track. These are usually the fastest, highest, and most thrilling of all the coasters.

A number of years ago, my wife and kids visited the theme park at Cedar Point in Ohio, which is world-renowned for its collection of coasters. Let me tell you about the coaster called Millennium Force. At that time, it was 2nd highest coaster in the world, with a drop of 320 ft. Today, there are six other coasters that have higher drops, one of those being Fury 325 at Carowinds. When I got on Millennium Force, I was already a little dizzy from some other coasters that had twisted and turned me every which way but loose. So, when I was strapped into this coaster and jetted down a 320-foot drop at about 92 miles per hour, I was ill-prepared for what I was about to experience.

Acceleration and de-acceleration are expressed in terms of "G," with 1-G describing the effects of gravity we experience under normal conditions while at rest on the surface of the earth. When accelerating to 2-G, one would feel the force of gravity doubled. As G-forces increase due to acceleration, you begin to feel heavier and experience difficulty in moving your arms and legs. As G-forces continue to increase, you may experience difficulties in moving your hands and feet and are not able to lift your head to look around. At 5-G's, your ten-pound head would weigh 50 pounds.

There are other effects of increasing G-forces as well. Blood circulation becomes impaired as the heart must work harder to pump blood through the body. This impaired circulation can lead to a dimming of consciousness as the heart can no longer pump blood to the brain. One might start to experience tunnel vision, then colors would fade away and everything would appear as white. That's where I found myself at the end of this 320 ft. drop on that coaster. If I were in a space shuttle or aircraft and didn't take countermeasures, the white would have faded to black and I would have just experienced a gravity-induced loss of consciousness or blackout. Aeronautics experts say that, in general, anything more than 4 or 5 G's will cause the average person, who has not been trained to deal with these effects to blackout. Extremely high G-levels can lead to



more serious complications, such as compacted bladders, bursting red blood cells, subdural hematoma, the inability to breathe and the cessation of circulation.

Gravity Induced Blackout (GIB) is dangerous to your health, wouldn't you agree? Not many of us have experienced this, not even on the level that I experienced that day. But I believe that in this roller coaster ride of life, every one of us experiences what I will call "pressure-induced whiteouts (PIW) or "pressure-induced blackouts" (PIB).

Unfortunately, it doesn't take a roller coaster to induce the kind of pressure that can and will produce the same kind of phenomenon. I wonder—in your life journey, how many "G's" have you felt like you have been pulling lately? How often have you found yourself at a place or a time in your life where everything seems blurred or whited out? When you can't seem to see ahead, or you literally feel the weight upon your heart or chest? You may be there right now! This kind of pressure may have been triggered or caused by any number of things; but it usually occurs as a result of a series of mounting pressures, expectations, or unresolved conflicts. It may have been brought on by a failure (e.g., job, marriage, missed promotion); or perhaps a result of a hurt, pain, or a wound (misunderstood, abandoned, dreams shattered, and etc.).

Whatever the circumstances that you find yourself facing, one thing we know for sure is that the deceiver's strategy is always to trick us into making choices that place us under the weight of these pressures. And these stressors, over time, will certainly lead to confusion, a "whiteout" or "blackout," and even, perhaps, an inability to see, think, or feel. Satan is hoping that our confusion, numbness, or sense of being overwhelmed will lead to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. In that moment of weakness, Satan levels a one-two punch: (1) you can't trust God—God won't do for you what He said he would do; and then the next jab, (2) you are of no value or significance to God or anyone else—so you might as well give up! Time and time again, the deceiver throws his punches. What he is hoping for is that you and I will succumb to the pressure and choose to remain paralyzed Christians and are mere survivors of this roller coaster ride of life.

However, the other thing that I know for sure is that God is who He said He is. He is the great "I am!" I know that He will deliver on all His promises because He is faithful and true. And I know that He has a plan and a purpose for each believer to deliver us through the PIW's and PIB's of life and allow us to experience the "thrill" of living this roller coaster ride of life for Him and His glory and honor. I believe that this is exactly what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 4. He shows us the truth about the journey: (vs. 8-9)

"... we are afflicting in every way, but not crushed; perplexed (or in doubt), but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..."

You see, it is not God's intention that the twists and turns of your life paralyze you or make you sick. God knows that this mortal life is a roller coaster ride; that it is certainly going to be difficult and at times, painful. This is not heaven! Although He has prepared for us a place in eternity, we are not yet there. So, while we wait, our loving God desires that we experience the thrill and joy of living for Him.

I have developed a strategy for riding roller coasters that allows me to enjoy the thrill of the ride in spite of the reality of the pressure, G-forces and impact that each turn, each drop, each twist has upon my physical body. What I have found is that this strategy also works as I am facing PIW's and PIB's. Here is what I do:

1. I make some preliminary "wise" choices
2. I recognize and accept the design of the roller coaster
3. When I get on the coaster, I focus straight ahead

First, I make some preliminary wise choices. Several of those include: I choose not to ride anything that goes around and around (I know I will get motion sickness); I choose not to ride anything that goes backward; I limit the number of rides that I take on a coaster that is designed to constantly flip me over and over; and I don't ride anything on a full stomach. In other words, I limit or steer clear of rides and coasters that I know will make me sick or that attack my balance or equilibrium.

May I suggest to you that our histories are full of junk. Satan has succeeded in filling our lives with cycles of experiences which tend to go around-and-around. Why do you choose to go round-and-around? "Not me!" you might content. Well then, how many times have you heard yourself say, "Here I go again!" "I just can't do anything right!" "I just can't stop this!" or any number of other dialogues or "self-talk" that cycles over and over. These tapes indicate that there are (what I

continued on page 13

call) "core beliefs" that have been built up, over time, based upon and undergirded by lies that Satan has fed us throughout our lives. There is always just enough truth to trick us, but not enough to reveal the true nature of that core belief—that it is a lie. The Holy Spirit, however, also speaks to us (as believers) as we go round-and-around, showing us that we are riding a ride that is making us sick, producing confusion; that is convincing us that our lives are helpless and hopeless. So, when I glimpse that I am going in circles, I choose to stop riding that coaster.

I also choose not to ride any ride that goes backward. Does that mean that I won't regress from time to time? Certainly not. But I do have a choice. When I am aware that a certain choice will take me backward, I choose to go forward. Satan's attempts to trick me into thinking, believing, and acting upon the lie that I "can't go forward," are met with the truth from God that exclaims that "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me."

And I also choose not to ride when my stomach is full. You know what's going to happen if I do? —my stomach won't be full very much longer. When my world is full; when there is just too much stuff going on around me and I am feeling overwhelmed by it all, I don't make important decisions. I wait until I am able to digest, I think, I reason, but most importantly, I pray and wait for God to give both an answer and the peace and security that will come as a sign of knowing His will.

Secondly, I recognize and accept the design of the roller coaster. Each coaster has a unique design and a unique purpose. One may be to drop you; another to hurl you; one to shake you, or another to turn you. Perhaps, some of the new steel coasters do all the above. But all the coasters have one common purpose for which they are also designed—to bring you safely to the finish. When I grasp hold of the fact that these coasters are designed to carry me and the other riders through to the end, then I can focus upon having fun. It is the same with our roller coaster journey of life.

My confidence in life lies not in my own abilities; nor may it be placed in any number of the survival skills that I have learned over the span of my life. My confidence certainly cannot be focused on people or human structures. My confidence must only be focused on recognizing that my Savior has designed a plan to bring me safely through the storm to the finish. In spite of whatever circumstances, I face, the Lord will fulfill His promises to me and will complete His purpose in and through my life. My hope and confidence are in Him!

Thirdly, I focus straight ahead. In the midst of a 320 ft. drop at 92 mph, or as you are turning a sharp curve or being twisted upside down is not the time to sight-see. You can't afford to be distracted by other things that are going on around you. You must focus straight ahead. When things are moving so fast around you or you have fallen into confusion or can't see far ahead, the trick is to focus just ahead on what you can see. "Keep your eyes fixed on the Lord," declares the Word of God—not upon your circumstances, not upon any other individual; but upon the one who goes before you and lights your way toward peace and security and blessings. Keep your eyes on the author and finisher of your faith—upon Jesus. He is the straight and the narrow way. He invites you to see Him, know Him, and love Him. He alone says, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy of heart, and I will give you rest."

There is one final thing that I do: I laugh, throw my hands in the air, and enjoy the ride! My God is for me! For sure, not all the journey is going to be pleasant—I can't expect it to be. This journey in preparation for heaven is a bumpy ride. We are riding in an out-of-control world characterized by sin and rebellion. But I know who I am in Christ. I belong to Him because He has laid claim to my life and sealed my destination by His marvelous sacrifice of His precious bloodshed on the cross. I know He has designed a plan for me and I know where I am headed. I can't see it all just yet, but I know where the end of the ride will be and I know He will bring me safely through it. Blessings and enjoy the ride!

Dr. Jack R. Hodges, Jr. is the Senior Pastor at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Morganton, Burke County. He has served as a pastor, a biblical counselor and a International Mission Board missionary.

The Value Of Broken Things

By David Valls
Mitchell County



What is the first thing people do when they find something broken? Usually, they throw it out. We tend to discard broken things because we see them as having no value or as being beyond any hope of repair. Now, let's look at this from a spiritual perspective. I am sure glad it does not work that way with the Lord. God specializes in finding value and potential in that which is broken. God does not use people who have it all together to do His work. He uses those who are broken. Psalm 34:18 tells "the Lord is near unto them which are of a broken heart and saves such which be of a contrite spirit." A good example of this is found in the book of Luke. A beggar by the name of Lazarus, laid at the gate of a rich man daily, begging to be fed, even if it was from crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. The dogs came by to lick his sores. The beggar died, was buried and went to paradise, while the rich man lifted his eyes in hell. The beggar was saved despite his physical brokenness. The rich man found himself in the torments of hell because he rejected Christ. A man by the name of Saul of Tarsus spent his days persecuting the church and had men and women thrown in prison, simply because they followed Christ. He presided over the stoning of a man name Stephen because he preached the Gospel of Christ. He walked on the road to Damascus with permission to persecute anyone that was found practicing Christianity. While walking on the road, he was struck blind by the light of Jesus and was converted to Christianity and became one of Gods greatest ambassadors. This was the SAME man who had once persecuted the church so severely. He was a broken man spiritually, yet God saw potential in him that he himself or no one else saw. He never dreamed that God would take his desire to persecute the church and transform it into a strong desire to see the gospel taken to the whole world. These are only two of many examples found in the Bible where God used broken people. Many think they must perfect themselves before they come to Jesus Christ. Not true! God wants us to bring the broken pieces of our lives to Him and allow him to put them back together. He is the potter; we are the clay. He alone has the power to make us what He wants us to be. God does not throw away that which is broken. He simply molds it into a masterpiece. No matter how broken you are, God wants to use you. He has a plan and purpose for your life. Bring your brokenness and your burdens to Him. Jesus said cast all your cares on me because He cares for you. Many think that God is unconcerned with their problems and that He does not understand what they are going through. My friends, God Himself came to this earth in the form of a man called Jesus. He walked as we walked; He felt all the things we felt. He knows our pain. He knows our sorrow. He is acquainted with all our ways. Not only can he fix our brokenness, He understands our brokenness. My friends, do not be afraid to come to Jesus just as you are. He will transform you into exactly what you were meant to be.



David Valls attends Middle District Freewill Baptist Church in Buladean. I am from Mitchell County. I have been the adult class Sunday school teacher for the past 13 years.

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Sudoku Solution

2	7	6	9	1	8	3	5	4
5	1	3	2	6	4	7	9	8
4	8	9	5	3	7	1	2	6
9	3	7	6	4	5	8	1	2
6	4	2	1	8	3	5	7	9
1	5	8	7	2	9	6	4	3
7	6	5	8	9	2	4	3	1
8	2	4	3	5	1	9	6	7
3	9	1	4	7	6	2	8	5

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47



Sen. Ralph Hise
Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net
919-733-3460

Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the state budget over his ultimatum for Medicaid expansion. Despite numerous attempts by Senate and House leaders to negotiate with the governor on his stated priorities, he chose, instead, to veto the state budget over a single policy disagreement. An absence of a state budget blocks raises for state employees and teachers, \$4.4 billion for school construction over 10 years, tax cuts, scholarships for low-income children to attend the school of their choice, and funds to eliminate the rape kit backlog. As part of the negotiations, legislative leaders offered the governor a special session only to deal with access to health care issues, including Medicaid expansion; however, he rejected that offer and every other one that did not include an immediate expansion of Medicaid.

Adding more folks to the Medicaid rolls does not mean more care would be available, as there is already a shortage of health care practitioners in our rural areas. Almost 1 in 5 North Carolinians are already on Medicaid, including 40% of children. Medicaid also covers 54% of all births in North Carolina. The expansion would further strain a system that is already strained. A 25% increase in a number of Medicaid recipients puts at risk those currently receiving Medicaid — low-income parents, children, pregnant women, the elderly, blind, and disabled.

If our state expanded Medicaid, it is expected that 500,000 people would be added to the Medicaid rolls, of which 215,000 are in the "coverage gap" between marketplace subsidized coverage and traditional Medicaid, which means that the nearly 300,000 of these 500,000 who are currently eligible for government-subsidized insurance on the marketplace, or are receiving coverage through their employer, would be forced onto Medicaid under expansion and no longer have access to private health insurance. For those who do have private insurance, Medicaid expansion would result in higher costs for them. In states that have expanded Medicaid, hospitals have cost-shifted their loss from the lower reimbursements they receive for Medicaid patients to patients with private insurance.

Numbers do not support the claim that expanding Medicaid will help in the fight against drug abuse, addiction, and overdose deaths. In 2017, the five states with the highest death rates from drug overdose all expanded Medicaid early on. All five states saw an increase in deaths from a drug overdose. A case in point is West Virginia, which expanded Medicaid in 2014 and then saw a spike in overdose deaths from 35.5 percent in 2014, the first year of Medicaid expansion, to 57.8 percent in 2017. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, of the 26 states with above-average opioid death rates, 20 of the states have expanded Medicaid.

Multiple studies show that the expansion of Medicaid to able-bodied adults in many states has created a smaller labor market, that is, fewer people willing to work. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that adding childless adults to the Medicaid rolls could decrease the likelihood of them working by 10%. Lastly, numerous studies have shown that despite the tremendous cost of Medicaid expansion, there is no significant, if any, improvement in health outcomes. Supporters of expansion claim that new Medicaid enrollees would see a primary care physician and make fewer visits to the emergency room for non-emergency care. However, according to a study by the New England Journal of Medicine, new enrollees in Oregon made 65% more emergency room visits over the first 6 months than those not covered. This trend continued over 3 subsequent 6-month periods.

I have always advocated for increased access to health care in multiple ways,

including repeal of Certificate of Need (CON) laws and allowing APRNs to practice at the top their licensing and training to fill the gaps in health care coverage in our rural areas. As always, please share your thoughts with me on these or other issues related to state government by emailing me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net or calling me at 919-733-3460.

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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of The Story
By: Farmer Doug

I cannot help but belly laugh when I read these episodes of Clint on the farm and remember back to the day it took place. That watering tank is still working and still has to be cleaned out quite often but the electric fence has been replaced by a 4-strand barbed wire fence that has a gate where Clint decided to become an electrified wire chutcher. I remember my disbelief when I looked back and he was standing there shaking like a leaf holding the wire with this weird look on his face. I knew that it would not kill him but thought he had lost his ever-loving mind! His story tells it all and is totally funny. Enjoy the read and don't hold on to electric fences!

The Funny Farm

By Clint Pollard

Many of you have written, emailed or called about this column. It seems that you find delight in my many foibles, misadventures and near-misses with danger. Also, some have questioned my veracity – that would be TRUTH telling – regarding these tales. A couple things you should know: The Lord undoubtedly protects me from myself and the myriad monsters and events that seek to snuff me out, and these stories are absolutely true (not to say I don't exaggerate a teeny tiny bit ☺) Now get a load of this:

Pride Comes Before Electrocutation!

It was another warm and DRY day at Harrell Hill Farms. I understand, now, why farmers are obsessed with the weather. I was asking God to open the heavens and pour moisture on our parched farmland. Hay ain't growin', 'maters are wiltin', 'tater patch looks like a forest fire aftermath... the soil is groaning for water. Babbling creeks and free flowing streams which had cascaded only weeks before now have slowed to a mere trickle.

This day my friend Doug Harrell has drug me all over the mountainous terrain, spraying some kind of dastardly weed killer on the fence line. He's learned not to trust me on the tractor in the presence of other human beings so he drives, dragging me and 10,000 feet of yellow hose in his wake. I am trudging through the valley, pulling 5 miles of hose pipe, spraying this modern day nuclear waste on a gazillion miles of pig weed. (By the way, one day I will ask the Lord how come He made pig weed... it's ugly, it chokes edible plants, and has thorns the size of horseshoe nails... that just ain't right!) Anyway, I'm cautiously running behind the tractor trying to avoid falling into a groundhog cavern. For I know there is an underground monster wanting to drag me to the center of the earth's core and devour my flesh!

Having dumped our load of herbicide it's time to repair the watering holes for the cows. I guess they are called watering holes, although they are more like watering tanks. They really aren't tanks either, they are really cement donuts which rise out of the earth and fill with water from who knows where. I mean there is no water on the gardens, no water in the creeks, and here I am looking at a round concrete hicky-doo full of life saving water... go figure. Man, so much to learn on this farm!

Anyway, A.D. Harrell – "Daddy D" to his family – has told Doug we need to unstop these fountains, geysers, watering holes... whatever in the heck they are. Seems mud and debris are interfering with the flow. So off we go to do whatever a farmer does to unstop the cow spring!

Well, there's an electric fence around the pastures to keep the bovine in and others out. Weeks ago, I was shown where to connect and disconnect the power making entry safe. If you care, the power comes out of a little out-building, sort of an ancient haunted shed type structure beside Daddy D's home. My first foray to the shed I fully expected a two-headed snake, a gigantic spider or at least a swarm of bees to assault my personage. Although I do recall the spider webs appearing like a Johns-Marville fiberglass factory. Thankfully not a single behemoth approached me, and Doug told me always to remember to disconnect the power before touching the wire. Duh! What kind of moron does he think I am?

As we neared the cow watering spigot I thought I saw Doug take the wire in his hands to steady his vault over the fence. You need to know that Doug and Daddy D are my heroes, in many regards, but I especially long to be a farmer like them. And, Doug and I have long had a competitive "thing" between us, whether playing golf, picking beans or eating cake. One always hopes to outperform the other. Back to the fence...

Following in Doug's footsteps, I grabbed hold of the barbed wire, with both hands, preparing to carefully lift my right leg over. BAM...BANG...%\$#@!...lightening raced through my fingertips, tingled through my wrists – continued up my arms, neck and head, spilling down into my back and belly, exiting through my feet. Heck I don't know – it's not a constant shock, it's a SLOW electrocution technique. I felt like an electric eel, did the hokey pokey, wriggling and dancing to the rhythm of pulsing electricity. Nearby Doug had "that look", as if he was suspended in time and space, unsure he was seeing what he was seeing.

Meanwhile, I'm clinging to this fence for dear life – smoke emanating from inside my wet gloves (Okay, not exactly pouring out but so it seemed). Yet I thought, "If Doug Harrell can hold this wire I CAN TOO. I will not give up." And I did...and I did...and I did. My hair standing on end...each appendage covered in goose bumps as body hair rose to the heavens...smoke coming from my ears...I was convulsing to the passage of intermittent electricity. I wore a hunted look, a sickly grin as I was not about to fail what I thought was another test of my farmer mettle.

Doug finally approached and said, "Uh, what are you doing?" At that moment, I lost my will to continue this insanity...I don't care if Doug had held this fence for longer than I...time to surrender. Periodic bursts of electricity passing through Farmer Clint's body cannot add to life expectancy...I would simply lose this challenge!

Pouncing over with both legs, I released the wicked barbed wire at last. I gazed at Doug with newfound admiration and inquired, "How did you do that? I mean, didn't it hurt you?" Confused he asked, "How did I do what?" Perplexed and annoyed I continued, "Hold onto that wire so long...it's HOT!"



As I've come to expect, Doug just smiled at me – that kind of smile that implies, "Oh goodness where did I find this guy" – and said, "Clint, the fence is hot. I went under the wire, not over it."

I burst into laughter, the kind that shakes your belly and innards...still smoldering from the prehistoric torture fence. Now I was upset so I asked Doug, "Why did you let me do that – I could have been killed?" With a twinkle of mischief in his eyes and wonder in his mind he replied, "Well, I don't know about that. It's not likely you would be killed. But I've learned that when you mess up it's with gusto...and by the time I catch what you're doing it's too late to save you." I grunted and we moved on to help Daddy D unplug the cow fountain.

Tapping on Doug's shoulder, I pronounced with utmost confidence, "Bet you can't hold a hot fence as long as me." "Yeah, you win that one, Clint," he said, as he walked away chuckling and shaking his head.

I thought about my misplaced pride and how trying to outdo another, much less a friend, is not what God wants from me. Improper display of pride is shocking – get it, shocking! (That's funny I don't care who ya are!)

Regardless of my incompetence as Farmer Clint, I know that the Lord stood there with me – although He likely kept His distance while I held the hot wire. Yet, once again, miraculously I had cheated death on the funny farm.

Farmer Clint



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Pleasant Hill Baptist Church

Prayer

By Caron Cline
Burke County



What is prayer? Why do we pray? How much do we pray? Does God really answer prayer? Then why do we spend so little time in prayer? Could we be guilty of unbelief?

Genesis 4:26b ('at that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord') is the first mention of prayer in the Bible, although Adam and Eve surely talked to God in the Garden before and after they were evicted. This little verse is tucked in after the fall of Adam and Eve; after Cain killed Abel; and even after several generations had been born. By this time, evil was rampant in their midst.

Did men begin to call on the Lord because they felt the weight of their sin? We know that people do not seek God on their own, therefore, God placed within their hearts a desire to call out to Him. In Genesis 5:28, we see that one of Cain's descendants, Lamech had a son and named him, Noah, saying, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed".



God always desired to dwell among the people He had created, but the fall brought division and separation. Things grew worse and worse, and finally, God became sorry that He had made man and decided to destroy all life with a great flood. However, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was also a comfort to God because he was a righteous man. We do not see any scriptures that speak of Noah praying to the Lord, yet obviously, he did. He was a light in a very dark world. It is amazing how God always has someone prepared to fulfill His mission on planet Earth. Noah had a personal relationship with the Lord, an intimacy that produced obedience to the Word and the will of God. That is fertile ground for a vibrant prayer life.

After the flood, we still see very little mention of prayer until we meet Abraham and then only after God's covenant with him in Genesis 15. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. In Genesis 18 we pick up the dialogue that the Lord had with Abraham about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham started pleading with the Lord to spare the city if he could find 50 righteous people. He went all the way down to 10, but not even 10 could be found. Notice the boldness of Abraham with the Lord. He was speaking with the Lord on a personal level, as a friend, but also with much boldness. Why did the Lord allow such an intimate exchange? He could have stopped Abraham with a glance. What gave Abraham the right to speak this openly? It was his relationship with the Lord based on His faith in God's promises.

In Genesis 20, we see a little glitch in Abraham's faith, however, God still heard his prayer. Abraham told a foreign king, Abimelech, that Sarah was his sister, rather than his wife because he believed that the king would kill him for Sarah. However, God spoke to Abimelech in a dream and said to him, 'Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. Now Abimelech had not approached her'. The Lord continued the dialogue with this king by telling him to return Sarah to Abraham. Although Abraham had lied to this king, God said to Abimelech: 'Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live'. Why did God answer his prayer? Because even in his moment of weakness, Abraham was a man who walked in the righteousness of God based on faith. That is the key to an effective prayer life.

We will not see the word prayer mentioned again until the book of Numbers, although we must assume many servants of the Lord prayed fervently. After all, Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord in Genesis 32 and declared that He would not let go until he received a blessing. This was also a prayer. Jacob had been a deceiver and had lived up to his name quite successfully. God had a greater plan for him. The angel asked Jacob his name as if he didn't already possess that information. Yet, it was crucial for Jacob to speak his name. 'I am the deceiver'. Then the angel said, 'your name will no longer be deceiver; it will be Israel, which means 'he struggles with God'. That struggle changed Jacob forever. He was no longer a deceiver, but a prince of God, based on his faith. It is an act of faith to wait on the blessing regardless of the consequences for he walked the rest of his life with a limp.

Are we in the right place to have God's ear?

Are we willing to be people who call on the name of the Lord wholeheartedly?

Do we live a life that is a comfort to God?

Are we in a position to come boldly to God in prayer?

Have we believed God to the point that we have become the righteousness of God? (2 Cor. 5:21)

Do we keep short tabs with the Lord? (1 John 1:9) (Psalm 66:18)

Have we become the new creation in Christ that is a necessity to have our prayers answered? (2 Cor. 5:17)

Are we willing to wrestle with God concerning our needs, even if it takes all night? Are we willing to wrestle with God concerning our needs, even if it leaves a scar?

Our number one goal is to be prepared for an audience with the King.

Caron Cline is a full time wife, a part time manager of retirement communities, volunteer Director of Woman's Missions at her church and on an ongoing journey to become a true full time disciple of Jesus Christ. She enjoys playing piano, singing, gardening, watching movies and hanging out with her fabulous husband.



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Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Decision American Tour Returning to North Carolina This Fall

By Franklin Graham

Franklin Graham's ongoing Decision America Tour will roll across his home state of North Carolina this fall.

From October 1-13, the Decision America Tar Heel State Tour will make eight stops in Fayetteville, Greenville, Wilmington, Raleigh, Greensboro, Hickory, Charlotte, and Asheville.

Decision America North Carolina Tour Stops

- Fayetteville
- Tuesday, October 1
- Greenville
- Wednesday, October 2
- Wilmington
- Saturday, October 5
- Raleigh
- Sunday, October 6
- Greensboro
- Wednesday, October 9
- Hickory
- Thursday, October 10
- Charlotte
- Saturday, October 12
- Asheville
- Sunday, October 13
- Times & venues to be announced

Billy Graham was born and raised in Charlotte, which is home to the Billy Graham Library and the headquarters of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Before Mr. Graham passed away in February 2018, he spent many years in Montreat, North Carolina, just outside Asheville. That's where Franklin Graham and his four siblings were raised.

"The work of BGEA has deep roots in North Carolina, and I am excited to have the opportunity to preach the Gospel in cities across the Tar Heel State," Franklin Graham said.

The Decision America Tour has been traveling across the United States since the beginning of 2016, when Franklin Graham visited all 50 state capitals to lead Americans in prayer and call the nation back to God.

The final stop of the 2016 tour took place in Raleigh, North Carolina, where more than 14,000 people crowded the Capitol Grounds to pray together.

Since then, Franklin Graham has continued to travel to various regions of the country—most recently the Northeast—to tell people the Good News of Jesus Christ.

"There's lots of religions in this world, but there's only one Jesus," he shared with thousands of people in Syracuse, New York, last month. "He gave you a soul, and it's valuable because He paid for it with His blood."

When dozens of upstate New Yorkers walked to the front of the venue to indicate making a decision for Christ, Franklin Graham led them in a prayer of repentance and faith. Then he reminded them they just got a fresh start. A tremendous turnout in Raleigh, North Carolina, in October 2016 capped off the whirlwind tour of all 50 state capitals.

"You're forgiven. You're forgiven. You're forgiven," he said. "Don't stay in those sins. You've got a new beginning in front of you."

In North Carolina this fall, Franklin Graham will bring the same message of forgiveness and hope.

In some ways, the audience will be different than the one that gathered in New England and upstate New York. After all, North Carolina has long been considered part of the country's so-called Bible Belt. But many Christians in the state, including those planning October's tour, are quick to point out times have changed.

"Although most people would think of North Carolina as being the Bible Belt, I'm not so sure anymore," said Steve Rhoads, vice president of Church Ministry for the BGEA.

"The state that we live in is pretty secular, and you just have to be in Charlotte, Raleigh, Asheville or some of these places to see it," he said. "It's reflected in the culture. Many people live with no sense of God and no sense that people are responsible or accountable to anyone other than themselves."

"We see that in North Carolina more than we would have 10 years ago. You just have to look around. ... It's reflected everywhere."

"The state that we live in is pretty secular. ... Many people live with no sense of God and no sense that people are responsible or accountable to anyone other than themselves."

—Steve Rhoads, BGEA Vice President of Church Ministry

Rhoads, the son of a late Charlotte pastor, says many local preachers are well aware of North Carolina's slide into secularism.

"There are a lot of good, strong, Bible-preaching pastors, young and old, who aren't satisfied anymore with just doing the same thing but are realizing that we really need an awakening here," Rhoads said. "Churches can be full of people who go to church on Sunday but aren't born again. Unless God shakes up the church, it's miserable to be in big houses of worship that are dead. So pastors are aware that we need an awakening."

Rhoads hopes to work with many pastors in the coming months as tour preparations get underway. Ahead of the October events, the BGEA will hold Christian Life & Witness Courses across the state, with the goal of equipping believers to deepen their faith and have the courage and tools to articulate it.

"The problems that North Carolina faces are deeply spiritual, and the only answer to those problems is God," Rhoads said. "Franklin Graham is holding this series of events to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and to call the church to prayer. We look forward to working with thousands of churches to bring hope across the state."



Check back with BillyGraham.org and subscribe to our emails for updates on the Decision America Tar Heel State Tour, including venues, times and how you can get involved. In the meantime, please pray that people across North Carolina will find salvation in Jesus Christ.

Reverend Franklin Graham is President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief organization.

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Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4

Make A Way in the Wilderness

By Tim Tron
Burke County

The old path had been obliterated by the multitude of floods sweeping through the valley. Over the course of the late winter and early spring, the rains had fallen heavily upon the mountain. The water had nowhere to go but down into the valleys below. Massive logs had been strewn this way and that, like straws spilled on a table, their remains were all that was left, like bones upon the shoreline of a distant war. Now, there were only piles of dark, entangled webs of roots and logs. Their bulk lay wherever the currents had subsided.

One such testament to the disasters of this past season had now blocked the old trail which was once where my weekly crossing of the river would lead. It had been over a year since my last venture. Like a blanket of comfort, vines and forest growth had already claimed their new patron as their own. To once more scale the opposite shore would require finding a new way, a new path; blazing a trail once more through the wilderness. It was as if God was speaking to me this past week when all the events had fallen into place, such that there was finally time to seek out this new pathway. Much like many of our lives at this moment, you too might be waiting on that next door to open. You might feel like those prayers you have lifted over and over again are not reaching through your own ceiling. In this time of waiting, there is learning. In this season of pause, we must seek what we have yet to find in our faith.

One might ask, "Is it even worth the effort to reclaim that old path?" or if your congregation has lived through a natural disaster you might ask, "Is it worth the money to rebuild the church after the storm?" To those fallen on even the direst of life's circumstances, the question may arise, "How can I even go on living?"

God tells us through his prophet Isaiah, when he states, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19

We often cannot see beyond the next hill or bank of the river. God has put before us the opportunity to blaze new pathways, leaving the old behind. When we find our way is blocked by circumstances beyond our control, or have a tragedy strike, we must first seek Him. When we find God, we must then listen, for when we receive him, his indwelling will become our guidepost. When we learn to listen for that still small voice, we shouldn't be surprised to find guidance and direction, and often in the most unlikely of places.

The afternoon thunderstorms had been heavy, so it was no surprise to find the river was up. The sandbar, covered with all manner of stone, was now under water; it is my gauge as to when it is safe to cross or not. Having already decided that this would be the day to find out if there was a way possible, I went ahead with the plan. A wiser man might have simply passed for another day; not I. The first few footsteps into the murky turbulence proved my intuition was correct, the current was tearing away at my footing. Scarcely had not one step been taken before the next was nearly washed out from underneath. The crossing was not going to be easy. Not to mention, the distant shore, now covered with a network of vines and briars, would be even more daunting. I had just begun, and it seemed as if all was lost. In the back of my mind, the question arose as to, "Why, why are you doing this?"

Many times, when we are in the midst of our trial, even though we may be within the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, we are not alone; God is with us. As we take that next step, there are those in our lives watching, like the boats surrounding the ship upon which Jesus had fallen asleep. Each small vessel carried passengers, who also wondered if this may be their doom, waiting for a sign from the boat upon which Christ had found passage. To their amazement, from a distance, they watched as Jesus rebuked his disciple's unbelief, and then calmed the raging seas. Those too, who are with us each day, watching



our demeanor and response to the hardships through which we travail, are likewise inspired by the sometimes seemingly insignificant details of decisions we make; regardless, if it is something we find as trivial or something as horrific as the loss of a family member through a tragedy, each event elicits a similar revelation.



So, as I fought the raging currents to reach the other shore, it was with admirable satisfaction that when I embarked upon scaling the steep embankment, there was already an opening made by the hand of God. The force of the flood had caused not only trees to be washed away, but also the shape of the briars and vines had been swept into uniform patterns, causing them to lay one upon the other, like matting upon the earth. I easily found footing and barely had to cut back but just a few thorny green briars, here and there, until the paved trail of the Collettsville Park was in sight. All of my apprehension and fear had already been taken care of by the Master's hand. All that was asked of me was to try, to take that first step into the raging torrent and trust in Him.


"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." -Isaiah 43:2

When we find ourselves in these times of trial and waiting, we must forge new forays into God's Word, turning pages we might have never sought before. We are often taken aback at how direct the word may speak to us. Who hasn't sought an answer from God, and in so doing, opened the Bible at random and found the very text to which your eye had cast upon answering you? But even in our doubt and struggle with waiting, we must keep every present in our mind that He will not leave us in our struggle. The wrath of destruction through which we survive, be it spiritual or physical, is not unnoticed by our Heavenly Father. When we pass through the storm, we will be blessed with the most loving promise, "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;" Psalm 103:4

In the silence, God is working on answering your prayers. Be ever vigilant and patient. It takes time, at least from our humanly perspective, for rivers to emerge from deserts. From the driest and most arid of the human soul can the fruit of the Holy Spirit spring forth, bubbling up unto the presence for all to see; a testimony of having battled through hell and survived by the Grace of God to tell the story. Step into that torrent, blaze that trail once more and never give up. Christ didn't die for your sins for you to throw away your life. You can make it. You have His promise. Thanks be to God.


Timothy W. Tron lives in Collettsville, NC, with his family. He is the former Director of the Trail of Faith in Valdese, where he still volunteers and helps with tours. He now teaches Math full time at Watauga High School in Boone. He is the author of a new Christian series, "Children of the Light," with the first book being, "Bruecke to Heaven," and his recent book, being the second, "The Light in the Darkness." He is an active blogger, artist, and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, and is a Lay Speaker. He can be reached at twtron@live.com

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How Michael Collins Enabled Apollo 11 Moonwalk: The Way to Change the World
By Jim Denison

Fifty years ago this Saturday, at 1:46 p.m., astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin separated the lunar landing craft from the Apollo 11 command module. As they moved toward the moon, astronaut Michael Collins stayed behind. He was 250,000 miles from earth.

While Armstrong and Aldrin received much of the attention for their magnificent feat, their journey to the moon and back would have been impossible without Collins.

He piloted the command module through maneuvers that detached it from the third stage of the rocket carrying them into space. He then pivoted the module and steered it as it docked with the lunar landing vehicle. When the lunar module returned from the moon, Collins directed the command module to reacquire it, enabling Armstrong and Aldrin to reenter the craft they would ride for the journey home.

In short, without Michael Collins, there would be no lunar mission to celebrate this week.

The heroes who saved a cathedral
Former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens died Tuesday at the age of ninety-nine. One of the longest-serving justices in US history, he was nominated by President Gerald Ford but eventually became the leader of the Court's liberal faction. His support for abortion, gay rights, gun restrictions, limits on government aid for religion, and the legalization of marijuana influenced the Court and the culture.

In other news, the New York Times is reporting on its extensive investigation into the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. It turns out, the According to the Paris mayor, "It was clear that some firefighters were going to go into the cathedral without knowing if they would come back firefighters who saved the cathedral did so at great risk to themselves.

According to the Paris mayor, "It was clear that some firefighters were going to go into the cathedral without knowing if they would come back out." The iconic landmark is now being rebuilt and will be a lasting tribute to their sacrificial courage.

Whatever our view of Justice Stevens' moral positions, his cultural legacy is profound. Though most of us do not know the names of the firefighters who risked their lives to save Notre Dame, we stand in their debt.

The "only thing" that changes the world
One of the great challenges facing culture-changing Christians today is the sense that society is headed so quickly and disastrously in the wrong direction. It's as though our cultural cathedral is on fire and no amount of water, we spray on the conflagration will be enough to make a difference.

But the opposite is the case.
While I disagree with anthropologist Margaret Mead on a variety of issues, this statement attributed to her is profoundly true: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

From Adam and Eve in the Garden to John on Patmos, it's hard to think of a significant event in Scripture that did not involve a significant person. The same is true today: you have been entrusted with spiritual gifts and cultural influence that are uniquely yours. Your Father's calling on your life is as individual as you are. Discerning his call, however, can be challenging for us all.

Faithful to the last word you heard
I have been reading the Book of Joshua recently and was struck by this fact: shouted while the priests blew their trumpets, and the walls of the city fell (Joshua 6).

For the latter, some Israelites attacked and then retreated, drawing out the men of the city. Other Israelites then attacked the city from the rear. The two forces then combined to destroy their enemy (Joshua 8).

Clearly, the way God has led us in the past may not be the way he is leading us in the present. For each circumstance and challenge, he has a word and a will for his people.

As a wise mentor once taught me, the key is to stay faithful to the last word we heard and open to the next.

"Your face, Lord, do I seek"
Here's the catch: To know God's word, we must be within hearing distance of his voice.

Our Father says to us, "Seek my face" (Psalm 27:8a). David responded, "My heart says to you, 'Your face, LORD, do I seek'" (v. 8b). And the Lord said of him, "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will" (Acts 13:22). When we seek an intimate, personal relationship with God, we can then know and do his will. And God will use our faithfulness, as he did David's, to leave an eternal legacy.

No one, not even an astronaut, a Supreme Court justice, or a cathedral-saving firefighter, is more important to God's work in our world than you are.

Would your Lord say you are seeking his face today?

Jim Denison Ph.D speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues. His daily column is distributed to more than 113,000 subscribers in 208 countries. See more on the website www.denisonforum.org. Copyrighted and printed by permission from Denison Forum.



By Dave Ramsey

Dear Dave,
My wife is so charged up after reading your books, and now she is determined to get us out of debt. I know this is a good idea, but I just don't have the passion for it she does. There are also some things I really don't want to give up. Do you have some suggestions for getting motivated?
Ken

Dear Ken,
Goals and dreams always have a better chance of coming true if you have a written game plan. Sit down with your wife at the beginning of each month, and help her do a written budget. Give every dollar a name on paper before you spend anything.

Contrary to popular belief, doing a budget is not torture. It's also not just a math exercise. It's an opportunity for you both to have input on what you want to accomplish in life and how to make it happen. After two people are married they become "as one." And that's how decisions should be made in a marriage—facing all the problems, dreams, and fears together.

Once you sit down and do a budget, I think you'll see where you can cut back and make things happen that you thought were impossible before. You may have to give up a few things for a little while, but when you see how quickly you can get ahead by making your money behave, I've got a feeling you'll get excited about the possibilities!
—Dave

Dear Dave,
We've followed your advice and put our kids on commissions instead of allowances. The problem is our 8-year-old. He never buys anything, and he seems to be very frugal by nature. Do you have any advice for teaching him it is okay to spend money sometimes?
Stephen

Dear Stephen,
You're absolutely right for wanting to teach him wise spending habits. Each of us has the personality of being either a saver or a spender. As parents, we should help our kids grow in areas where they have weaknesses, and find ways to enhance their strengths.

Give him praise for being such a good saver, but gently encourage him to spend a little, too. Spending is one of the rewards of work and disciplined saving. You might urge him to pick out something he really wants and help him make a plan to save enough money to buy that item. Once he has enough money for the purchase, turn it into a celebration of reaching that goal.

There are three things you can do with money—spend it, save it, and give it to others. Focusing too much, or too little, on any of these is not financially or spiritually healthy.
—Dave

Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 14 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.



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Fickle Feelings

By Joyce Meyer



There are some people in this world who are extremely reliable. You can count on them for just about anything and somehow, they'll always come through. However, I've found that many people are not very reliable.

Maybe you know someone who is a nice person, but if you ask them to do something, you're just not sure if they're going to follow through. In other words, they're unreliable.

I've discovered that feelings are a lot like unreliable people—we can't depend on them to be what we want or need them to be all the time. Not only that, they aren't necessarily interested in what's best for us. And they always want to have their way.

Feelings get us excited about going shopping when we really don't have any money to spend. They entice us to eat cheesecake when we're trying to avoid extra calories, and lead us to stay up late working or watching TV when we need to get up early the next day. Then after the damage is done, we have to deal with the consequences.

Our feelings are fickle—they change like the wind. Yet it's amazing how much we let them have their way in our lives. But as believers in Christ, we have something much better and more dependable to follow than our feelings—and that's the Word of God.

Conquering Confusion with the Truth

When we feel strongly about something in our heart, it's not always easy for us to determine whether or not we're really in agreement with God (see Jeremiah 17:9). Thankfully, God's Word doesn't leave us lost in confusion.

Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is *"sharper than any two-edged sword...exposing and judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (AMP).

So, if we really want to rise above our feelings, we must let the Word of God be the final deciding factor in our decisions. There will be times when we can't find a verse for the specific issue we're dealing with. But we can always pray and ask God for wisdom (see James 1:5).

In the meantime, we need to trust Him, be patient and keep on praying.

Remember that God is always available to help us live beyond our feelings and do what pleases Him.

Set Your Mind to Do What's Right

The first step toward managing our emotions is found in Colossians 3:2. It says, *"Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above...not on things that are on the earth...."*

There are many things in this world that could easily affect our minds and emotions—and we need to learn how to rise above them all. When negative thoughts are building up and trying to take control of your emotions, take a few minutes to set your mind on God and His Word.

It also helps to speak positively about whatever is bothering you. Have a chat with yourself that goes something like this: "My family may not be everything I'd like them to be, but I am thankful I have a family. My house is not as nice as I would like it to be, but it's still a nice place to live. I don't see how I'm going to get through this painful situation, but Jesus is with me and He will help me overcome it!"

How to Win a Spiritual Tug-of-War

Sometimes we want to ask God to instantly change our circumstances when we're struggling. But the truth is until we learn to be content in every situation we face, we will continue to be tested.

Jeremiah 17:10 says, *"I, the Lord, search and examine the mind, I test the heart, to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."*

There are a few different "buttons" the devil knows he can push to get an emotional reaction out of me, so I make a point to prepare myself before that happens with the Word. I love Psalm 94:12-13. It says, *"Blessed [with wisdom and prosperity] is the man whom You discipline and instruct, O Lord, and whom You teach from Your law, that You may grant him [power to calm himself and find] peace in the days of adversity...."*

You see, the more we discipline ourselves to say no to our feelings and yes to the wisdom of God, the easier it becomes to defeat them in a spiritual tug-of-war. I want to encourage you to consistently take time to focus on what the Bible says. It will empower you to control those unreliable emotions and do what is best for you!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-CD series *Managing Your Emotions*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including Battlefield of the Mind and Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress (Hachette). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

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Patton Students' Invention
Helps Local Industry

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

Patton High School students received a project in conjunction with Advanced Hydrogen Technologies Corporation (AHTC) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) to design and build an apparatus which would repeatedly drop a 35-pound-weight from 2 feet high.

The project was given to Patton students in mid-April and needed to be completed by the end of the school year, around June 5. This required the Principle of Engineering class, under the direction of Clay Nelson, to come up with a timeline of which tasks needed to be completed. Once this schedule was completed, the work began by splitting students into four groups to brainstorm ideas. After a full day of brainstorming, each group presented to the class using various presentation methods to share ideas for the groups to use in another day of planning. Students then came together again to share changed ideas and plans. The groups then used robotics kits to prototype their designs. One design utilized a motor clutch in order to drop the weight, another used a slip gear and the last used a lever dropping mechanism. Once the prototypes were completed, the students decided on two designs to build using materials such as angle iron, wood, and various other items. One group started from the ground up and built the part of the mechanism, which would house the piece of granite and guide the weight so it struck the granite perfectly each time. The other group started from the top down and constructed the dropping mechanism first. As time was running out, the students then decided to combine their designs into what is now the completed mechanism which successfully drops the weight consecutively with no fail.

Pete Lohr, president, and chief technical officer of AHTC, said, "On behalf of AHTC, I would like to personally thank Mr. Clay Nelson and Patton High School staff and students for their support. Engineering staff and students assisted by designing and building an apparatus that will lift and drop a test article for the purposes of performing impact fatigue cycle testing with known impact energy and cycle rate. I witnessed the students participating and was very excited to see them enthused about being able to contribute towards a working solution. I was very impressed with everyone's ability to come together and work as a team. The project came together beautifully in a relatively short period of time; the drop-test apparatus that they built is robust and works very well. The test results will be used for a new manufacturing process; specifically, it will be put to use for quantifying test article's integrity of bond strength and the ability of the article to survive in a simulated environment that represents the conditions of a chisel mounted in a hydraulic breaker/hammer while being used to excavate granite rock."

AHTC, a privately owned, small business in Hickory, works to find cost-effective alternatives to current products and manufacturing methods when safe high-pressure hydrogen, bonded dissimilar metals, and ceramics to metals are needed. Its goal is to create manufacturing jobs and bring a full range of job opportunities for Burke and Catawba counties.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, "We would like to thank AHTC for believing in our students and giving them this opportunity to take a real-world problem and use their engineering skills to design and build a solution. This is the perfect example of how we seek to connect education to industry. It's a win-win for everyone. Our students gained real experience and AHTC benefited by having a problem solved by young, creative minds."

Cheryl Shuffler is the Public Relations Officer for the Burke County Public School System.



"Love Makes A Home" At The Orchard

By Kate Groff
Mitchell County



On Thursday, August 1, the Orchard at Altapass continues its 25th-anniversary celebration with a performance of "Love Makes A Home: The Life of Rebecca Boone," by author and playwright Kiesa Kay. Rebecca married renowned frontiersman Daniel Boone when she was 17. Over the next 25 years, she birthed 10 children, cared for their children, and adopted several others as her own. Rebecca epitomized the definition of a pioneer woman. With her husband and family, she walked through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Kentucky before finding her final rest in Missouri, making new homes and rarely spending more than 2-3 years in each location.

Featuring old-time fiddling by William Ritter, Rebecca, portrayed by Terra Currie, recalls her life during the almost two years her husband spent lost in the woods. Although a courageous hunter and adventurer, Daniel was no businessman, lost all the family's money and most of their land and expected his wife to maintain the home front. Always understanding, Rebecca saw to the needs of her children, teaching them to hunt, forage, and build so they would never be without food and shelter. Without formal education, Rebecca was reputed to be an experienced community midwife, family doctor, leather tanner, sharpshooter, and linen-maker—resourceful and independent in the isolated areas she and her large, combined family often found themselves.

Through all her trials, she had little bitterness. She was honest and blessed with a supportive family and an indomitable spirit. In this one-person play, Rebecca, during a rare and serene evening alone, reveals her most intriguing secrets.

"Love Makes A Home: The Life of Rebecca Boone" starts at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 1, at the Orchard at Altapass, located at 1025 Orchard Road in Spruce Pine (mm 328.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway). Tickets will be available for \$15 at the door. The General Store will be open and refreshments available. For more information about the play and all the Orchard projects, please visit the website, www.orchardataltapass.org visit the Facebook page, or call 828-765-9531.



Kate Groff is the Programs Coordinator for the Toe River Arts Council.



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"This Is My Story:

The Philippian Jailer" Acts 16: 25-34

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County



"And the prisoners were listening." That phrase from the testimony story we just read in Acts 16 always sticks out to me. When Paul and Silas were unjustly thrown into the prison in Philippi, they didn't bemoan their fate. The Bible says they were up at midnight in the prison, singing and praising God. And the prisoners were listening. That is a great reminder for us, by the way: the "prisoners" are always listening. People around us are always listening! We need to make sure that they hear something good from us when we speak — a witness for the Lord. "The prisoners were listening."

But it was not only the prisoners who were listening — Acts 16 tells us that the jailer was listening also — and it led him to Christ. This morning we are going to look at the story of how the Philippian Jailer came to know Jesus as his Lord & Savior. As we do, make sure that YOU TOO are listening, to how you can know that you have a story of salvation as well.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CONVICTED HIM (:25-30)

Verse 25 tells us that while they were in prison, Paul & Silas were singing, and 26 says that a "great earthquake" shook the jail, and everyone's chains were unfastened. Verses 27-30 tell us that when the jailer saw that the prison doors were opened and that everyone's chains were off, he thought they had all escaped. And he despaired. They tell us it was customary for a jailer if he allowed a prisoner to escape, to have to serve the punishment for the prisoner's crimes. And earlier in Acts 12, when Peter had escaped from prison, Herod had ordered the guards to be led away and put to death. This jailer was not going to wait for that; he despaired of his own life and was going to take his own life. And when, miraculously to him, he saw that Paul and all the prisoners were still there, he was so humbled, so shaken, so open now to whatever God had for him, that he cried out: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The circumstances were his worst nightmare; to him, it meant the end of his life. But God meant for these circumstances to bring him to the beginning of his new life!

You know, God often uses adverse circumstances to lead people to Himself. Many people in the Bible were like that:

- it took this jailer almost losing his life for him to come to Jesus;
- it took the thief being on the cross for him to put his trust in Him;
- it took one man being blind, and another being paralyzed.
- It took the man in Mark 5 being taken over by demons;
- it took the woman in John 8 is caught in the act of adultery;
- it took the Prodigal Son losing everything that he had.

They all came to the Lord because of the difficult and distressing circumstances they were going through.

We need to realize that one of the purposes for which God often uses our circumstances is to show us how much we need Him and to get us to turn our hearts to Him.

One of the new things we hope to do next year here at Pleasant Ridge is to have a World Mission Conference, in which we will focus on all of the missions connections we have, and share opportunities that each one of us has to give, and pray, and go on a mission. Several years ago, we had a Missions Conference like that at our church in Louisiana, and one of the missionaries who came to our conference told us about a young man they had been witnessing to on the mission field for over a year. They had shared the gospel with him repeatedly, but he had never been responsive to it. Then that December his father got sick and had to go to the hospital; they had no money to pay the bills, and this young man ended up losing his job — and he felt like he had just lost all hope. Then during this time, another one of his friends shared the gospel with him and told him to read the Bible and think about it. He did, and he ended up giving his life to Jesus as his Savior. The young man told his father: "I have found the True God!"

God used the very difficult circumstances of that young man's life to help him see his need of a Savior, and to bring him to Himself. God often uses adverse circumstances to lead people to Himself. This may be true of YOUR life here today! You should ask yourself: why has God allowed some of the things that are going on in your life right now, to happen to you? The truth is, God may have allowed you to come into some difficult circumstances right now, to bring you to admit your need for Him. You may be here today because things have gotten difficult in your marriage, or your finances, or your health, or some other area of your life, and you are looking to God for help. God can help you in a lot of ways, but the first and most important thing you need to do is to make Him your own personal Savior and God through Jesus Christ. You need a "story" of salvation in your life! And it may very well be that He has caused or allowed this particular situation to come into your life today — just like He did with the Philippian jailer — so that you could have a story of how He brought you to Himself.

II. THE CONDITION THAT SAVED HIM (:31)

The question that jailer asked in this story is the most important question in the world: "What must I do to be saved?" This is the question everybody asks ... all over the world, people are asking this very same question: "What must I do to be saved?" And different religions answer them, and tell them what they think they must "do" to earn their salvation:

— Islam tells a billion people: pray 5 times a day, at exactly 5:33 a.m., and at exactly 4 other times a day, and give alms to the poor, and visit Mecca on a pilgrimage, and fast during Ramadan ... then perhaps your good deeds will outweigh your bad, and maybe you can be saved ...

—Hinduism tells another billion people: make puja sacrifices, and bathe in the Ganges River, and perhaps you will be reincarnated into a higher state of life next time, and after a series of lifetimes of good works, perhaps you may be saved ...

continued on page 23

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— even some so-called Christian religions tell people: get baptized, and go to church, and give money, and keep the commandments (which we saw a couple of weeks ago that none of us can keep!) and observe rituals and sacrifices, and then perhaps spend years paying for your sins in purgatory, and then you may be saved.

All these religions tell you what you must “do” to be saved. Had salvation depended on those things, there would have been no hope for the thief on the cross, whom we talked about last week. He had not time to do any of those things! He couldn’t be baptized; he could fast; he couldn’t give alms; he couldn’t do any good deeds. Had salvation depended upon good deeds; he would have had only despair.

But it would not have been that thief only who would despair; we would ALL be without hope! Can you be absolutely confident, with your eternal destiny depends upon it, that your good deeds would earn you a place in heaven? I will be honest: I have NO confidence today that my good deeds outweigh my bad; I have no confidence that my good THOUGHTS outweigh my bad (and you do know that God judges’ thoughts as much as deeds?!).

But do you know what is even worse? The standard for getting into heaven is not a matter of your good deeds outweighing your bad, or your good thoughts outweighing your bad. It is a matter of perfection! Jesus said in Matthew 7:48, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” God is a perfect God; heaven is perfect; there can be no sin there. The standard for getting into heaven based on your good works is perfection itself. Now how does THAT make you feel? It ought to make you give up any hope of earning a place in heaven based on your good deeds.

It would be as if there was a great “exam” to get into heaven — a test of 1000 questions about the Bible, faith, and practice — but in order to get in, you could not miss ONE question. How much confidence would you have about getting in? You can’t miss ONE? I don’t think too many of us would have much confidence; I wouldn’t. There is no good answer for us in all the religions of the world, who tells us to try to earn a place in heaven.

But just as that jailer asked the greatest question in all the world, Paul & Silas had the greatest answer in all the world! In fact, it is THE greatest news ever. The news is so good that the very content of it is called the “gospel”, which means, “good news”! What is that “good news”? The good news is that you do not have to “do” anything to “earn” your salvation, but “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”! The reason that is the greatest news in all the world is that it tells us that your salvation does NOT depend on you trying to compile all the things that you can do to impress God, but all you have to do is just TRUST the great thing that HE did for YOU on the cross! “Believe in the Lord Jesus!” We can do that! This is the greatest, the most liberating news in all the history of the world! You can picture that good news like this: that just before you were getting ready to go in and take that 1000-question test to try to make a perfect score to get into heaven, at the last minute, just as you were getting ready to enter the doorway, with fear and trembling — Someone tapped you on the shoulder ... and you look around, and it is Jesus, and He says: “May I take this test for you? You can have MY score; you do not have to do anything; just trust that I will pass it for you!” Wouldn’t you take Him up on that?

The truth is, this IS what Jesus has done for you! He passed every test of life, perfectly: Hebrews 4:15 says: “*He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*” Even His enemies said: “We find no fault in Him.” Jesus passed every test in life perfectly, and He says, “you can have My score — if you just trust what I did for you.” As II Corinthians 5:21 says “*(God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” That means that God will GIVE us the perfect righteousness (the perfect “score”) of Jesus, that it takes to get us into heaven. You do not have to “do” anything to earn it; just trust that what He did will save you, just as John 3:16 says: “*Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

This is the greatest news because it is available to everyone: A man dying on a cross — or in a hospital, or in a home — can believe. The smallest child can believe. The oldest adult can believe. A paralyzed man with no opportunity to do good works can believe. Anyone of any kind, from anywhere in all the world, can do believe! YOU can believe! This is good news! Your salvation does not depend on what you can do for Jesus; it depends on you just believing what Jesus did on the cross for you: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved!”

III. THE CHANGE THAT ASSURED HIM (:32-34)

Now, I want to make one thing very clear: this good news is NOT (what some call) “easy believism”; it is not a matter of just saying: “I believe that there was a person named Jesus who died on the cross.” There are too many people, especially here in the south, in the so-called “Bible Belt”, who think that because they “believe” that there is a person named Jesus — and even what He did — that they are right with God. Virtually everyone you talk to here “believes” in Jesus — and yet many of them show NO evidence of a life that has been touched and changed by Him. Listen to me: a person whose life has not been changed has not truly come in contact with Jesus! Saving faith is NOT just saying “I believe in Jesus.” James 2 says “*the demons also believe and shudder*” ... the demons know very well who Jesus is, and what He did. But they do not have a personal faith in Jesus as their Lord & Savior. James goes on to say: “faith without works is dead.” In other words, works do not save you; faith in what Jesus did saves you. But if you really have that faith, you WILL have works that demonstrate that your life has been changed because your faith is genuine.

This jailer gave every evidence of a person who really believed in Jesus, and whose life was changed as a result. Look at the evidences in these verses of how his life had been changed:

— :33 tells us that he followed through his belief by being baptized. Baptism doesn’t save you; no religious work does. But getting baptized is one of the things someone who has really been saved will want to do, to testify to their faith.

— Secondly, :32, tells us that this man provided an opportunity for the gospel to be shared with his whole household so that they might all believe too. When you

really get saved, you want other people you care about to get saved too. This jailer showed that concern.

— Third, :33 tells us that after he was saved, he went that very hour and washed the wounds of Paul & Silas, and: 34 says that served them a meal. He turned around and became a servant, and a minister to others — which is what happens when you really get saved: you want to serve!

So, this jailer showed, by his baptism, by his sharing with others, and by his good works of mercy, that he really did believe. His life had been changed. Now understand getting baptized and telling others and doing good deeds did not save him — it was “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” that saved him — but the deeds that he did after he believed demonstrated that his faith was real.

— And notice too his “before and after” story: before he came to Jesus, :29 says he was “trembling with fear”. But after he believed in Jesus, :34 says he “rejoiced greatly”, having believed with his whole household. Faith in Jesus had made a real difference in his life. This was no “easy believism”, but genuine life-changing faith in Jesus.

This is what happens when a person has genuine saving faith in Jesus. II Corinthians 5:17 says, “*If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; new things have come.*” In other words, if you have really trusted Jesus, and He has come into your life, there will be some changes that happen in your life. It does not mean that you will be perfect — you never will be as long as you live on this earth — but there will be change.

It is just like with that jailer. He had a “story” of change. If he were working on his “30-second elevator speech”, it might go something like this:

“Before I came to know Christ, I had great fears, lest a prisoner escape, and I would forfeit my life. One day, my worst fears came true, as an earthquake opened the prison, and I thought the prisoners had all escaped, and I would be executed. I decided to take my own life instead. But one of the prisoners explained to me how I could put my faith in Jesus, and ever since that time, I have had a peace and a joy that I never had before, and now I serve God by telling others about Jesus and by ministering to His people.”

That Philippian Jailer had a story of change in his life because of his faith in Jesus. Can I ask you today: Do you have a “story” like that? Do you have a story of change? Again, it may not be dramatic; it may just be: “as a child I was afraid of what would happen if I died, but then I found out that Jesus died on the cross to pay for my sins and give me a home in heaven, and since that time I have never been afraid of dying anymore.”

Do you have a “before and after” story like that, of how you were before you came to Jesus, how you heard about Jesus, and how you have been different since? Is your life different than it was — or if you were saved as a young child, different from how it MIGHT have been? Does your life show the evidence of saving faith: Are you serving the Lord? Are you telling people about Him? Do you love to worship Him? Changing and serving and worshipping the Lord does not save you; but if you are saved, there will be a “before & after”; there will be things like this in your life. It will be the change that assures you that your salvation is real.

IV. THE COMPANY THAT ATTENDED HIM (:31-34)

The Impact His Decision Had on Others

When you get saved, other people will be impacted as well. We see that here in: 31-34. Paul & Silas told this jailer, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.*” And the result was, that his household WAS saved, :34 says.

Now, I need to say at this point, there are some religious groups, who believe in the baptism of babies, who point to this passage as evidence that a parent’s faith saves the child. They say: “See, this man AND his whole household were saved”, and so they baptize the child by the “proxy” faith of the parent. This is one of the few passages to which they can point to even try to support this belief. But if you look at these verses carefully, you can see there is actually NOTHING here to support such a practice! Notice:

— they told him: “*You shall be saved, you and your household*” (:31) — but then notice: 32 says “*they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.*” So, each person in his house got an explanation of the gospel! They didn’t just tell the jailer and expect all the rest of them to be saved as a result; they explained the word of the Lord to all of them. AND, significantly, evidently, those who were in his “household” were old enough to have the word of the Lord “spoken” to them so that they could understand it! These were not babies or children who were not old enough to understand. These were people who could be spoken to, and who could understand the gospel, for themselves.

— :34 then says that after they shared the meal together, that the jailer “*rejoiced greatly, having believed in God, with his whole household.*” So, it says they ALL believed this gospel they had heard! They were all saved, because each of them had the word of God explained to them, and because they each personally believed. There was no “proxy salvation” here, in which the father’s faith saved the whole family. There is no mention of babies, or children, or anyone else who did not understand. According to the text, this is the story of the salvation of several individuals in a given family, who each had the gospel explained to them, and who each personally believed. There is no “group” or “proxy” salvation taught here whatsoever!

Now, hopefully having made that clear, I will say this: whenever a person comes to the Lord, there is almost always a great opportunity for them to bring others to the Lord with him. We see that in a number of places in scripture:

— In John 1, when Andrew first heard Jesus and believed in Him, the Bible says “he found first his own brother, Simon (Peter) and told him, “*We have found the Messiah.*” And the next verses tell us that Philip went out and found Nathaniel and told him, and he came to Jesus and was saved as well.

— John 4 tells us that when the woman at the well met Jesus, she went back and told her whole town about Him, and many of them consequently believed.

New Writer – Spiritual Health

Temple Maintenance

By Dr. Miguel Cruz
Yancey County

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians, 6:19,20 KJV

I am proposing a series of articles dedicated towards the maintaining of the temple of the Holy Ghost, our bodies. First and foremost, I believe is our spiritual health. As far as the physical body is concerned, we can include topics concerning diet, exercise, maintaining a healthy nervous system, mental health and keeping our brain stimulated.

This month I would like to start off with our spiritual health.

Psalms 46:10 *"Be still, and know that I am God:"*

How often are you still enough to hear the voice of God within you? In this age of technology, life is moving so fast that many of us are running out of day before we get everything done. Unfortunately, our time with God seems to suffer the most. I can only speak for myself, but ever since I made the time early in the morning to read my bible, and be still to meditate on those words, my days have gone by better. And if for some reason I don't, it's just not a good day.

Romans 12:2 *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* KJV

How are your thoughts during the day? Are you constantly reviewing all your problems? Are you having imaginary arguments? Medical research has shown that such thoughts can make you chronically ill. How do you renew your mind? By spending time with God. Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* KJV

During the day, whenever I find myself with thoughts of despair, anger or anything else I would consider un-godly, I think on this verse and transform my mind with thoughts of things just and pure and of good report. It takes practice and training but with time you will see it works.

I wanted to keep this short and usable. Any thoughts or questions can be sent to Dr. Cruz at chiromac2000@gmail.com

Dr. Miguel Cruz is in practice along with his wife of 35 years, Lesia Cruz who is a certified Integrative Nutritionist. They own Cruz Life Center in Burnsville NC. Dr. Cruz is a licensed Chiropractor since 1981. When asked what he does for a living he explains that he helps people get out of pain and improve their overall health without the use of drugs or surgery. Something everyone seems to want but nobody seems to know how to get there. Dr. Cruz accepted Jesus Christ in the summer of 1979 while in chiropractic school. He has since dedicated his life towards helping people grow in physical health and spiritual health.



Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry

By Josh Robinson
Mitchell County

The Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry reaches out to the people of Mitchell County that have a hard time putting food on their table. We are currently located in Spruce Pine at 1353 Roan Rd in the Rock House. We are a non-profit organization currently under the Mitchell County Baptist Association. We are partners with MANNA Foodbank and we have been classified as an XLarge Facility based on the number of people we serve. We are currently providing food for over 300 people every month. You don't have to look far to find a person that is struggling. The mission field is just outside your own front door. The Bible tells us that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Do we really do that? We currently have people in Mitchell County that live on less than \$200 per month; some have no running water, no electricity, and no food. We have people going through dumpsters at our local grocery stores and the homeless population is on the rise. The only hope that these people have is God's people in the field. The Bible teaches us to show love, compassion, and not to judge others. If we judge others, God will judge us in the same manner. (Matthew 7)

Our ministry's goal is to feed the hungry, show families that God loves

them, and that the ministry loves them, and they are a part of our family. Our ministry is in need of volunteers, financial donations, and a larger facility. We are growing at a very fast rate and are at maximum capacity at our current facility. The people of Mitchell County need to understand that hungry families and homelessness are real, and it is here! Yes, there are people who need help all around the world, but we have an incredible mission field in our own backyard. It is sad to say, but it seems that a lot of people won't help out locally because they judge people they know, or they have bitterness in their hearts towards someone. Then, they stereotype all those in poverty based on their feelings towards a select few. We must put the bitterness and hurt feelings aside. God has given us a chance to pull together as one body in Christ and show His love for everyone!

Many of us were born and raised in this area, and it is our home on Earth. Please join us in this local mission field before we are called to our eternal home in Heaven. None of us are promised that we will always have a steady income, a home, food, good health, and family/friends. Anyone of us could be a day away from losing a job, a home, getting a bad health report, or losing a loved one. It may be you in need one day, so why not give while you are able and have the resources? (James 2:14-17) The living conditions described above are real, they are here, and these people are our neighbors. If you would like for us to come to your church or organization to give a presentation about our ministry, please contact us by phone or email.

Thank you and God Bless

Allen and Amy Hoilman – Directors (828-385-9446, 828-385-3975)

Josh Robinson – Assistant Director (828-385-1325)

Email: nfnfoodministry@gmail.com

www.nfnfoodministry.org

Josh Robinson is the Assistant Director of the ministry Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Food Ministry.



Left to right is Amy Hoilman-Director, Hunter Hoilman, Josh Robinson-Assistant Director, Allen Hoilman-Director.

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*"INSURANCE is the most IMPORTANT thing
a person has because it protects him against
the loss of everything he has in the world."*

-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder

Changing Culture by Sharing
Our Faith

By Rev. John B. Sorensen

There's been a lot of talk lately about the direction our country is taking. I'm sure you would agree that a lot has changed in the last several decades – and not necessarily for the better. Today, I can't help but think about how some people are trying to change our culture – deleting any reference to our Christian heritage.

Our culture is changing, but there's something we, as Christians, can do to change it for the better. We can share the Gospel!

I know that sounds simplistic but think about it. Faith in Jesus Christ changes everything. It changes what we value, how we spend our time, and where we spend our money. It even changes how we vote. Everything we do can become sanctified through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Millions of people around the world are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ every year because of someone, just like you and me, stepped out of our comfort zones to share the Gospel with them. Millions! Imagine for a moment what could happen if every believer led at least one person to Christ this year. How would that change our neighborhoods? Our cities? Our nation?

C.S. Lewis once said, "The most significant political act that any Christian can take is, to convert his neighbor." He understood that once someone's heart is genuinely changed, everything else soon follows.

How do we do that? Take a step of faith and begin that spiritual conversation. There's no right or wrong way to begin. At EE, we use questions like, "If you were to die today, would you know for sure that you would be with God in Heaven?" Or, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your spiritual life?" Or even, "How is your spiritual life today?" Listen to what they have to say, and then share the Good News of the Gospel.

Transforming culture happens one person at a time. But it won't happen at all if we don't step out and share about the One Person who transformed us, Jesus Christ. The Gospel was never meant to be kept silent. It was meant to be shared!

So, if you are concerned about the direction of America, share the Gospel. If you're concerned about what kind of country your children and grandchildren will grow up in, share the Gospel! It's the surest way I know to leave a godly legacy for future generations.

Rev. John B. Sorensen, D.D. is the President/CEO of Evangelism Explosion International, headquartered in Arden, N.C. EE has been a leader in equipping Christians to share their faith for more than 50 years. For more free tips and resources, visit evangelismexplosion.org.



Something To Think About -
Really Experiencing God!

By Dennis Love
McDowell County



Can you remember the last time you and your church really experienced God? The Bible says in Zechariah 4:6; "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." If anyone understands this verse it is Henry Blackaby. Here's what he did when the World's Fair came to Vancouver, Canada in 1986. He and the 2,000 people in the Vancouver association of churches were convinced that God wanted to use them to reach the twenty-two million people that would come to the World's Fair. Two years before the fair they began making their plans.

At that time the total income for the entire Vancouver association was \$9,000. However, for the year of the World's Fair, they set a budget of \$202,000 for their association. (Now that's a God-sized budget) They had commitments which would provide about 35 percent of that budget. The remaining 65 percent depended completely on prayer and the Spirit of God. As an association, they fervently prayed for God to provide what they felt He desired to accomplish in them and through them. By the end of that year, \$264,000 had come in from all over the world, and God used that small group of believers to be His hands, His feet and His mouth for seeing almost twenty thousand people coming to know Jesus Christ during the World's Fair.

Henry Blackaby said; "You cannot explain that except in terms of God's intervention. Only God could have done that." The people in the Vancouver association of churches really experienced God when they determined to accomplish something that only God could do, and they remained available for the Master to use them! Isn't it about time for our churches to really experience God? "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

Dr Dennis Love is the Senior Pastor at Glenwood Baptist Church in Marion, NC. He and his wife Vicki have been married for 39 years and they have been in Marion for five years. They have two sons and three grandchildren.



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Loving Jesus – George and L.G.

By Hannah Hensley

Here stands George and who we call L.G. (Little George a.k.a. Hobie). The similarities between these two can be uncanny. Their inquisitive minds are constantly asking questions and trying to figure out how to fix this or that. Papaw jokes with Hobie (L.G.) and Hobie can throw right back at him. They love cars and working on anything that has bolts and screws. They think alike, they act alike, and they most definitely eat alike. Food is very important to them and if they get grouchy, no need fuss and fight with them, just fix them a peanut butter cracker to tide them to supper and they'll be just fine. They're both very vocal about their aches and pains, about what they did yesterday and last week, what they like and don't like and a new idea that they came up with today. They're generous in what wealth they have and generous with their tender love. They tell the best stories and make best friends with strangers. They smile alike, they talk alike, and they can say the funniest things alike. To see and to be with Hobie today, I swear Papaw George must have been the same at 7 years old and so we consider Hobie our window to Papaw's boyhood. They share a love old western tv shows, riding around in the pickup and Roadside Rest's burgers and fries. Yes, no doubt about it, George and Little George are two peas in a pod. But, despite all their quirks and the gags they pull, we love them. We love George. We love L.G. And perhaps we love them more when they're together, especially in such a setting as pictured below. Because they are so much alike, no picture could be more beautiful than Papaw loving Jesus and Grandson loving Jesus. Together they're loving Jesus. Together they prayed, worshiped and sang the hymns. They bowed their heads together, raised their hands together and they took of sweet communion together, side by side.



I never take my phone in church, let alone turn it on, but it just so happens that I threw it in my purse this morning and I'm glad I did. Because some moments must be remembered. They must be recognized, maybe even glorified. Because in this life all these little moments will add up and they will equal everything.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Jeremiah 29:11

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Introduction to The Gospel of John

By Dr. Ken Day
McDowell County



John, a Jewish fisherman was an original follower of Jesus the Baptist prior to being directed to follow Jesus, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world", (1:29). His father was Zebedee. His younger brother, James, was also a disciple of Jesus. They were known as Sons of Thunder. It is unknown as to why Jesus referred to the brothers using this title; however, one can infer that it must have been in reference to their explosive nature.

The internal evidence in this Gospel points to John the Disciple as the author. Ancient church Fathers such as Irenaeus and Polycrates, verify him and his work. He was one of three witnesses at the transfiguration of Jesus, recorded in Mark 9:2. John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. As Pastor in Ephesus, he is the only Apostle who was not martyred however he was submerged in oil for his faith and lived. Exiled to The Island of Patmos, off the coast of Greece, is where he was given a vision; and proceeded to write the book of Revelation. He later penned the Epistles of John, and it seemed apparent that these letters were addressed to the same readers as The Gospel of John. Forty percent of John's Gospel is devoted to the last week of Jesus' life, and twenty percent is considered prophecy.

The purpose of this Gospel is stated in John 20:31, "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is The Messiah, The Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name". (NRSV) The word believe is used ninety-eight times. Christ's divine nature and the interpretation of his life are the primary focuses. Fifty percent of the words used are by Jesus, and the writing was at a time the church was plagued with a denial of Christ's divinity. John envisions a listener who does not believe that Jesus is one hundred percent man, and one hundred percent God. It is a rebuttal of Jewish monotheism and a direct assault to Greek cultures belief that the world is too defiled for God to become a man. The teaching and learning in this Gospel are full of conversation, and interaction.

John's use of symbolism is powerful with images that are original and follow our desire to know God. We see the clarity of purpose in the "I am" statements attributed to Jesus. "I am the bread of life" (6:35) The is an image of hunger for nourishment. Yet life is more than food. In John 4 the writer reports Jesus closely relating an image of thirst. Jesus is the "living water". "I am the light of the world" (8:12). The image conjures up the contrast between darkness and light with blindness, along with seeing. Remember Nicodemus who came to Jesus at dark? The conversation is well known because of Nicodemus, a teacher of the law whose spiritual blindness amazed Jesus.

"I am the gate" (10:7). Jesus is the gate to the sheepfold, as well as the shepherd whom leads his sheep (10:11). To broaden this application, Jesus is the point of entry to a new way of life. "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). Jesus displays to us power over death's sting; a contrast to confinement in a tomb. A new life here, and an everlasting one with The Father. "I am the good shepherd" (10:11-14). An image of a protector who knows his own sheep; and is willing to lay down his life for them. "I am the true vine" (15:1-5). A symbol of abiding in the vine otherwise known as Jesus, so that we can produce much spiritual fruit. Understanding that we cannot do anything apart from the true vine (Jesus). "I am the way, truth and the life" (14:6). Jesus tells us the way to The Father, and if you know Jesus, you know The Father. The truth is the opposite of falsehood. Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?". Pilate was looking right at The Truth, yet he did not recognize it. Life is in opposition to death. We find our life (10:10) now, and in his resurrection (11:25).

In conclusion, only The Apostle John remains with the knowledge and experience to write this book. He has written out of the personal experience, and enlightened memories by The Holy Spirit. This resulted in a valuable document written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is The Messiah, The Son of God and that through believing in him, you may have life in His name (20:3).



Ken Day is an Agency Manager with Farm Bureau Insurance in McDowell County, and an Elder at Victory Church in Morganton.

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Avery County

Volunteers needed to advocate, protect the rights of long-term care residents Boone, NC (June 26, 2019) – The High-Country Area Agency on Aging Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is calling for volunteers in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Volunteer ombudsmen, also known as Community Advisory Committee's (CAC) serve as advocates for residents living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

CAC members are trained, certified volunteers who are assigned to a local long-term care facility to advocate for residents' rights.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer ombudsman or to request an application, call Stevie John at (828) 265-5434 Ext. 126 or visit the High-Country Area Agency on Aging website at www.highcountryaging.org.

2019 Waldensian Festival - Since 1976, on the second Saturday in August, Valdese hosts an annual festival to celebrate the "Glorious Return" of the Waldenses from exile in Switzerland to their native valleys in the Cottian Alps of Italy in 1689. This celebration is mirrored around the world by other Waldensian communities. The Town of Valdese continues to improve the Waldensian Festival each year and make it one of the best festivals in the state of North Carolina. The 2019 Waldensian Festival will concentrate on unique crafts, great food, and top-quality entertainment. To achieve this goal, the committee continues to search for wonderful artists, food vendors, and entertainers from around the country. Choosing participants that will come together to make an unforgettable festival.

The 44th Annual Waldensian Festival will be held on August 9 & 10, 2019.

Lees McRae Theatre - Lees-McRae Summer Theatre presents Newsies in August. For more information please email mclendonk@lmc.edu or call 828.898.8709 or go to lmc.edu/community/summer-theatre. Playdates for Newsies are July 30 – August 4, 2019. Newsies is the rousing tale of Jack Kelly, a charismatic newsboy, and leader of a band of teenaged "newsies."

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church Events - The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is OPEN every Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Like us on Facebook at [@thegivingheartthriftshop](https://www.facebook.com/thegivingheartthriftshop), The Giving Heart Thrift Shop is a ministry of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

God's Closet - Morganton Free Shop Day! Sunday, August 4th, from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. There will be FREE clothes for children ages 0 - 18 years old. No documentation required. For more information visit our website www.morgantonsda.org and Like us on Facebook [@GodsClosetMorganton](https://www.facebook.com/GodsClosetMorganton) and [@MorgantonSeventhDayAdventistChurch](https://www.facebook.com/MorgantonSeventhDayAdventistChurch)

Town of Valdese Concert Schedule

2019 Season Lineup:

August 2: Skaterink Jukebox

August 9 & 10: 44th Annual Historic Valdese Waldensian Festival

Friday Night Entertainment - Cassette Rewind & Gump Fiction Saturday Entertainment - Gary Lowder & Smokin' Hot

August 16: Carson Hill

August 23: To Be Announced

August 30: Concert Series Finale Celebration – Tim Clark Band

McDowell County

New Community Outreach Benefits McDowell Families with Children Teens for Christ B.E.A.R. Closet

(Baby Equipment and Resource Closet)

Beginning Wednesday, August 1st, 2018 the youth group at Cross United Methodist Church located at 85 West Cross Street in Marion will launch a new outreach ministry benefiting families with children. The outreach will be open the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. and the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. For more information or if you are interested in volunteer opportunities call (828) 803-8790 or email TeensforChristBEAR-closet@yahoo.com.

Clinchfield Baptist Church - will be celebrating its 104th homecoming on Sunday, September 15th. We will be having a concert by "The Taylor's", during our morning worship service beginning at 11:00 a.m. We hope you can join us at 1150 East Court Street in Marion, N.C.

Cross Mill United Methodist Church - in Marion is now accepting donations of NEW items for an upcoming fundraising auction. Proceeds from the auction will go toward much-needed church building repairs and our 24/7 Sharing Food Pantry Ministries. Any business and/or individual donations would be greatly appreciated. Call 828-460-9257, 828-442-8098 or 828-803-8790,

First Baptist of Marion - The Children's Committee is creating a library for the children and families with the church and daycare. We are accepting donations of new and gently used books for children of all ages and reading levels, as well as resources for parents. The donations will supplement the selection of books currently on hand. Please leave donations in the main office. Thank you!!!

36th Annual Mountain Glory Festival - Now Accepting Craft Vendor Applications

Saturday, October 12, 2019, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Marion - Where Main Street Meets the Mountains

Vendor applications for Marion's largest craft festival are now being accepted. For 36 years, beautiful downtown Marion has hosted this popular celebration on the 2nd Saturday in October. This year make plans to be part of the Festival, Saturday, October 12th, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

Visitors will be looking for original handicrafts on Main Street three main blocks. Featured will be 150 craft, food, non-profit and sponsor booths of locally made arts and crafts; festival foods and local wines and beers. Plus, two stages presenting Marion's finest musicians.

Don't miss the annual Mountain Glory Quilt Show inside the McDowell Arts Council. The quilt show is the gallery's featured, October exhibit. The kids will have fun in the "Children's Arena" with hands-on activities and local entertainment.

You might even see Bigfoot, Marion's Official Animal!

The festival is sponsored by the City of Marion. For festival information visit www.mtngloryfestival.com or call 828-652-2215.

Mitchell County

Mitchell County 4-H - Hands-on Museum and Gray Fossil Site Field Day –

Date: August 2nd; Time: 9am-5pm; Ages: 5-8; Cost: \$ 20; Drop off Location: Mitchell Cooperative Extension

Linville Caverns Field Day – Date: August 5th; Time: 9am-4pm; Ages: 9-18; Cost: \$20; Drop-off Location: Mitchell Cooperative Extension

Take me out to the Ballgame- August 5th; Time: 6:30pm-until; Youth of all ages, parents/guardians and families; Cost: \$ 5 each; Location: McCormick Field, 30 Buchanan Pl, Asheville

Senior Wilderness Hike- Date: August 7th; Time: 9am-5pm; Ages: 11-18; Cost: \$ 10; Drop-off Location: Mitchell Cooperative Extension

4-H Summer Fun Hands to Service- Date: August 8th; Time: 9am-4pm; Ages: 5-18; Cost \$ 5 donation (Please feel free to donate any amount you would like);

Location drop-off: Mitchell Extension Location: Pick-up: Brian Center Health & Rehabilitation Center, 218 Laurel Creek Ct., Spruce Pine, NC

Mitchell Baptist Association 2019 Annual Meeting

Monday, August 26, 2019, 3:30-5:30 (Break for evening meal) 7:00 pm at Berry Chapel Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, NC; Tuesday, August 27, 2019, 7:00 pm McKinney Cove Baptist Church

Baptists on Mission Region 9 Rally - The Baptist on Mission Rally will be held at Grassy Creek Baptist Church on Tuesday, August 13th. The meal will be served at 5:45 PM. Registration is required for the meal. (no cost) The program begins @ 6:50 PM. This rally will highlight the variety of opportunities NC Baptists have to be involved in missions across our state, in our nation, and around the world. Featured will be worship, testimony, mission video, and a prayer time for missions.

These rallies are for men, women, and youth- everyone interested in missions is encouraged to attend. To register, call Tracey Ford at 919-459-5596.

The Harris High School Class of 1965 will be having a Reunion on Saturday, August 10th @ 1:00 This will be at Harris Middle School, 121 Harris St in Spruce Pine, in our old high school building. For more info call Daniel Whetstone @ 828-675-5169; Peggy Riddle @ 828-765-7960 or Barbara Ledford @ 828-724-9671.

Grassy Creek Baptist Church - will celebrate Homecoming on Sunday, August 4th. Rev. Daniel Stewart of Robbinsville will be the guest speaker and the Toe River Drifters will be supplying the music. Service begins at 10:30 am (no Disciple Life classes) followed by a covered dish dinner in the Family Life Center. Pastor Nathan Silver invites you to join us for this special occasion. For more information call the church office at 828-765-4620. GCBC is located south of Spruce Pine on Highway 226 across from Parkway Fire Department.

Celebrate Recovery - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving help and help for men, women, and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josh Wise @ 385-0061

There will be a meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families. There is also a Children's program.

YaYa Village - We are announcing the Opening of YaYa Village Commercial-Share Kitchen!

We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commercial Shared Use Kitchen so that we could provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for locals trying to sell their products. This way we strive to help community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.

So, if you have a product you want to market and sell (like jams, jellies, baked goods, etc.) or if you need a commercial kitchen for catering, having a private Pop Up dinner, hosting a class or whatever you're imagining; we hope our Shared Use Kitchen can provide you with a solution.

Come visit our space, get an application and let us talk to see what is that you have in mind!

We are also serving lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Sign up for 2019 After Hours! Business After Hours are held to provide an opportunity for Chamber members to network while allowing the Member to sponsor a chance to address and/or showcase their facilities. Business After Hours are held monthly to bi-monthly, and generally on a Tuesday or Thursday (unless

other arrangements are made). The Member sponsor and the Chamber representative will coordinate the event. After Hours begins at 4:30 p.m. and ends at 6:00 p.m. (unless other arrangements are made). Send your questions and reserve your month by emailing Kelly at kjones@mitchellcountychamber.org.
August: Mitchell County Animal Rescue September: The Switzerland Inn
October-November: OPEN We do not have After Hours in December.

2019 Calendar of Events for Downtown Spruce Pine

Mineral & Gem Festival	Aug 1-4th, Cross Street Building
Summer Concert	August 2nd, Central Park
Summer Concert	September 7th Central Park
Walk A Mile Fundraiser	October (TBD), Central Park
Fall Clean-Up	October-TBD, Downtown Spruce Pine
Potter's Market	October 13 & 14th, Cross Street Building
Merchant Trick or Treat	October 31st, Downtown Spruce Pine
Small Business Saturday	November 30th Downtown Spruce Pine
Kiwanis Christmas Parade	November 30th, Downtown Spruce Pine
TRAC Studio Tour	December 6-8th, Mitchell & Yancey County

* Farmer's Market every Wednesday at Bank of America beginning in April
For more information about any of these events, contact SPMS 765-3008

Toe River Arts - June Studio Tour Applications

The Toe River Arts Studio Tour is perhaps the largest and the longest-running studio tour in the country; you will find craftspeople and artists in nearly every medium, many tops in their field and several new-to-the-tour participants. FREE, and self-guided, this adventure will lead you to some unique places situated between Mt. Mitchell and Roan Mountain. Visitors travel through valleys, past streams, across rivers, over hilltops, and experience breathtaking mountain vistas as they make their journey through the Toe River Arts region. Meet the artists, see where they create and where they live.

Toe River Arts will sponsor a Meet-The-Artist reception at their Spruce Pine location on Friday evening after the tour closes for the day. A sampling of participants will be on display geographically so one can plan a route for the rest of their journey.

For more information, please call 828.682.7215 or email.

Tipton Hill Community Foundation (Tipton Hill) – Country Breakfast, the first Saturday each month, 7:30 – 10:30 am, at the old Methodist Church, across from Jerry's Store. Come join us for homemade sausage, scrambled eggs, gravy, jellies, juice, and coffee. Eat-in or take-out, all funds support the Tipton Hill Community Foundation.

Mayland Small Business Center

Marketing Regional Assets to Build Customers: Business Builders Breakfast (1.5 Hours) New!

Does your business showcase the scenic and unique assets of our region? At this free breakfast workshop, we will discuss ways that businesses should market regional assets to increase customer traffic and awareness. 8/13, T, 8:00-9:30 a.m. Fee Waived Instructor: TBD Burnsville Town Center 828.766.1295

Social Media Marketing Tips for Local Artists – Build a Better Post (2 Hours)
Gain area focused knowledge from Toe River Arts marketing specialist, Mea Johnson. Customers respond to effective social media posts. Seminar will cover tips for building effective posts, optimum times to reach customers, dos and don'ts of posting, and best social media platforms to reach potential customers. 8/14, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Johnson TRA Spruce Pine Gallery 828.766.1295

Instagram for YOUR Business (2 hours) Bring your smart phone! Instagram for business is a great way to reach customers! Attendees will receive instruction on set-up, downloading the Instagram app, and the basics of an Instagram for business account. The class will also cover customer building strategies for posting photos, hash tagging, and how to link Instagram to Facebook for increased visibility. 8/22, T, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Avery 828.766.1295

Facebook for YOUR Business (2 Hours) - Facebook for business is a great way to engage existing and potential customers. This class will cover the basics of Facebook for YOUR business such as account set-up, downloading the Facebook app, and best practices. Attendees will also learn how to build effective posts, strategies to engage new customers, and how to link Facebook to other popular social media management platforms. 8/22, T, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Fee Waived Instructor: Jones Avery 828.766.1295

MAYLAND SBC ENTREPRENEURSHIP CERTIFICATE:

Attend one class or all six! In this series, learn how to be a successful entrepreneur. SBC business professionals and guest presenters will increase your business savvy by providing current and applicable information. Upon completion of all six classes, participants will receive a certificate from the Mayland Small Business Center which is a great document to include in a business plan. Completion of the Mayland Small Business Center Entrepreneurship Certificate is a requirement to apply for Downtown Entrepreneurial Assistance Grants in Spruce Pine and Burnsville.

CLASS ONE: How to Start & Finance a Small Business (2.5 Hours)

This seminar will cover key strategies for business start-up and financing. Students will gain information about business structures, potential legal issues, licensing, zoning, and operations. Learn the importance of a self-assessment and how to evaluate the feasibility of your business idea. Discover resources available

to help start, finance, and successfully operate your business. 8/27, T, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Cook Mitchell 828.766.1295

CLASS TWO: How to Write a Business Plan (2.5 Hours)

A business plan is vital to starting and operating a business. Learn how to turn ideas into a solid plan for financing and long-term success. This seminar teaches the important components of a business plan and helps lay the foundation for a functional plan. Discover how a business plan is used by potential lenders, the dos and don'ts of writing a plan, and steps for making the process easy. Participants will be given templates for building an effective business plan.

8/29, TH, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Cook Mitchell 828.766.1295

CLASS THREE: Finding Your Customers (2.5 Hours)

This class will focus on growing and retaining customers. Presentation will discuss the typical customer in the area and how to build a customer profile to attract new customers. In addition, attendees will explore a variety of market research tools that provide critical information about competition, industry, and customers. 9/3, T, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Lyden Mitchell 828.766.1295

CLASS FOUR: Basics of Bookkeeping (2.5 Hours)

This class will discuss common bookkeeping methods used for small businesses as well as popular online bookkeeping platforms. Attendees will gain a workable knowledge of how to properly record and archive transactions. The seminar will also discuss how financial statements factor into small business bookkeeping. 9/5, TH, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Beam Mitchell 828.766.1295

CLASS FIVE: Marketing your Business (2.5 Hours)

This class will discuss common marketing practices for local entrepreneurs. Discover how to most effectively and efficiently use the many marketing tools available. Gain insights to understand and reach your customer, analyze your industry and business environment and differentiate between branding, advertising, and grassroots marketing techniques. Explore the components of an effective marketing plan in this comprehensive seminar.

9/10, T, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Brossman Mitchell 828.766.1295

CLASS SIX: Your Small Business Taxes (2.5 Hours)

Attendees will become familiar with the common local, state, and Federal tax requirements typical to local small businesses. Seminar will also discuss tax planning and strategy for entrepreneurs. Class will be taught by a CPA. 9/12, TH, 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Fee Waived Instructor: Sisk-Morris Mitchell 828.766.1295

Yancey County

Feed-A-Child Yancey County - Higgins fills bags the second Tuesday of each month. We have been fortunate to have enough volunteers to fill the bags so far. They are going to continue the program this summer through the churches in the county that have Wednesday night meals. If you have any questions about Feed-A-Child they can be directed to Bill & Nancy Watkins at 828-675-5367.

Baptists on Mission - Mission teams are needed to do Vacation Bible School, Evangelistic Outreach, and Construction projects in our partner states of Alaska, Vermont, Maine, and Pennsylvania. Mission teams can make a great impact in reaching these communities for Christ. Visit our website for full lists of projects at <https://baptistsonmission.org/Mission-Projects/United-States/New-England> or contact NC Baptists on Mission at 919-467-5607 or mabernathy@ncbaptist.org

Deep Impact Kids, Are you looking for a mission opportunity for the children in your church? Deep Impact Kids will be serving in many communities across the state with hands-on mission projects designed for 1st-6th-grade children. Sign up your church now for a weekend, mini-week, or full week at one of these locations: Camp Cale, Red Springs, Shelby, Mundo Vista, Caswell, or Truett Baptist Camp. For more information contact Dollie Noa at dnoa@ncbaptist.org. Website <http://baptistsonmission.org/camps/di-kids>

Yancey County Public Schools - Please join us for Yancey County's fifth annual Public School Prayer walk. This event will take place on Saturday, August 17 at 9:00 A.M./9:30 A.M. Parents, teachers, students, and community members are all encouraged to attend. We will be starting the Prayer Walk at the Board Office as we pray for the leaders of our school. The individual school walks will immediately follow (around 9:30). There will be a Prayer Captain at each Yancey County School to lead the prayer walks. This will be a time for our communities to join together and pray for our schools. This event is being sponsored by Moms in Prayer. For more information please contact Jessica at 284-2359. We will host an information session about Moms in Prayer after the prayer walk at 11:00 at the Yancey Baptist Association office on Main Street. Refreshments will be served. Come find out how you can impact your child and his/her school as you join the worldwide community of moms praying for our kids and schools in more than 140 countries and all 50 U.S. states.



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The same thing happened in our passage for today. When the Philippian Jailer was saved, his whole household ended up being saved with him. You can give example after example of this. Whenever someone comes to the Lord, they have a great opportunity to bring others to Him as well. And if it's real in a person's life, they want to bring the ones they love to Him! And if Jesus is real in someone's life, the people around them will see it, and will want to come to Him as well! Men, you need to know that this is especially true of a husband and father, like this jailer most likely was. When a husband and father gives his life to Christ, it does not guarantee his family's salvation, but it is rare is the family that does not follow him. If the husband and father is committed to Christ, the wife and children almost certainly follow along. Men: this means that you have a great responsibility! What you decide about spiritual things does not only affect you but also your wife and your children! And the same thing is true for each of us: your decision to follow Jesus will have an impact on other people around you. You need to be looking for the people around you that you can share your "story" with and bring to Jesus!

B. But having pointed out the impact you can have on others, we also need to emphasize again that salvation is always an individual issue. God doesn't save "groups". He saves people one at a time. Just like we see here in Acts 16, each person must hear the gospel, understand it, and trust Jesus as their Savior personally.

— This means, first, that you need to make sure that you have YOUR OWN personal story of salvation. Just because your mom or dad, or grandma or grandpa, or some other relative are saved, does not mean that YOU are. You have to have your own commitment to Jesus as your Savior.

— And second: you always need to be very careful about getting saved "in a group" or having your kids or loved ones saved as part of a "group", because salvation is a very individual, personal thing. So many people have the testimony of how they made a so-called "decision" to follow Jesus which they did not really understand it, because they came in a group with others.

My wife Cheryl shared her testimony with one of our ladies' Sunday School classes a couple of weeks ago, and her "story" is in our book here down front. When she was very young, 6 years old or so, they had a service at the church she grew up in, in Oklahoma, in which several youngsters went down to the front crying as a group. So, Cheryl started crying and went down the front too. But she said later that she did not really know what she was doing at that young age. Later as a teenager, when her boyfriend broke up with her, she realized that there was nothing in her heart to help her — the Lord was not really there — so right then she prayed to receive Christ, and from that moment had peace that the Lord was really in her life, and He helped her through that time. For the first time, the Bible also began to really make sense to her as she read it. Several years later, she realized that this was her true salvation experience and that it had happened AFTER she had been baptized as a youngster, so she was truly baptized there at our first full-time church we served as pastor & wife — as odd as it might sound — because she needed to have her baptism in the right order: after her genuine profession of faith. (And some of you here today may need to do the same thing!) Just like the Philippian Jailer, my wife Cheryl has a story. Just like him, it was a crisis time in her life that brought her to it. But the important thing is that she knows that she has a "story" of how she genuinely put her faith in Jesus, how her life has been changed, and that now she has the confidence that she has a real relationship with the Lord, and that she is going to heaven.

My question for you is, do YOU have a story? Whether it's just like Cheryl's or not, or just like the Philippian Jailer's or not, doesn't matter. The single most important question of your life is: have you ever individually and personally received Jesus Christ as your Lord & Savior? Do you have a testimony to write, of which you can say, "This Is My Story"?

Shawn Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at www.shawnethomas.com



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The Hope of the Gospel

By Tom Walker
McDowell County



Col 1:20-23 says- *"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and un-blameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."*

The Gospel of Christ gives hope to all that know the Lord Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. It gives us many things but one thing we must have is hope. It is sad to see a hopeless person who cannot see the daylight for the dark. The Bible describes the plight of the lost sinner as "having no hope and with God in the world."

Although that is true of the sinner, the lost person does not have to remain in that losing situation. Sin brings us to a hopeless situation. In contrast, the Gospel of God gives us hope for the future.

Before we get into the heart of the passage we have read, it would do us well to consider the word "hope" in the New Testament. The Greek New Testament word is Elpis (Elpis). It basically means "to anticipate the future with pleasure." This word has the idea of an expectation of something good to come.

The future of the lost sinner is very dark and hopeless, but what a different situation when one has believed the Gospel and given his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hope is something that has to do with how we look at the future while living in the present.

Our Past Plight

Our text tells us we were, *"Sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works"* (Col.2:21). There are two words that describe the person who is without Christ. If a person is not righteous, he or she is wicked. The Scriptures tells us that *"there is none righteous, no not one"* (Rom.3:10). It goes on to say in Romans 3:23 that *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

The Apostle Paul associates being alienated and enemies in the mind. It is in the mind that battles are fought and won or lost. No one ever sins and lives wickedly unless they consent to it in the mind. We can stop evil actions by dealing with what we allow or do not consent to in our minds.

The first word Paul uses to describe the unsaved in verse 21 is "alienated." It gives the idea that we were estranged, withdrawn, or indifferent. When two people find themselves in a heated argument, often they find themselves withdrawing and being indifferent toward that other person. The lost sinner is living his own life, controlling his own life rather than submitting it to God's control. What a miserable life it would be to be alienated from Almighty God!

The second word is "enemies." An enemy is a foe or adversary. Involved in being an enemy is hatred and or dislike. Philippians 3:18 speaks of people who were *"enemies of the cross of Christ."* People who profess to know the Lord and walk contrary to the conduct God desires for his people are enemies to the cross of Christ. Instead of promoting the cross by the way they live, they dishonor the cross through careless living. They turn others away from the cross instead of attracting people to it.

We, believers, are not all that we ought to be, and not all we are going to be, but we are certainly not who we were before we met the Lord Jesus in salvation. We are different now through the new birth. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

Our Present Privilege

Verse 21 describes a wicked life, in the first part of the verse, but now the Apostle Paul moves on and introduces us to the "reconciled" life. Colossians 1:21 says, *"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."*

Reconciliation is made possible through Christ's work on Calvary's cross and His shed blood. It has the concept of settling differences. It is the process by which God and man are brought together again. The Bible teaches that God and man are alienated from one another because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Although God loves the sinner (Rom 5:8), it is impossible for Him not to judge sin (Heb 10:27). In Biblical reconciliation, both parties are affected. Through the sacrifice of Christ, man's sin is atoned, and God's wrath is appeased. Thus, a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship.

The initiative in reconciliation was taken by God-while we were still sinners and "enemies," Christ died for us (Rom 5:8,10; Col 1:21). God Himself *"has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor 5:18).

Paul regarded the gospel as "the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19). And knowing "the terror of the Lord," Paul pleaded, implored, and persuaded men: *"Be reconciled to God"* (2 Cor 5:20).

The sinner needs to be reconciled because his sin stands between him and a holy, righteous God. Have you been made right with God through the new birth (Jn.3:3)?

Our Future Expectation

When God's word says something is going to happen, we simply wait for its future fulfillment. Remember, hope helps us in the present, but it also has the futuristic element where we are directed into a future, anticipated day.

What do we expect because of the promises of God through the hope we have deep within our hearts?

The Bible says we will be presented in three special ways before the Father in

Heaven:

He will present us holy (Col.1:22a). Holiness is not something we can produce but, God does it within us. The only way anyone can live a holy life is to have the Spirit of God within us producing holiness for us to express. Also, when we stand before God in eternity, because we have the righteousness of Christ put on our accounts when we believe, we will be presented holy and faultless (Jude 24).

He will present us as unblameable. That means that our Lord will present us in the glory world as those who have no blame or guilt. Since our sins are gone when we are saved, our record is clear in heaven. As far as salvation and reconciliation goes, we will stand before God without blame. Thank God, the blood of Jesus washes our sins away! A good preacher friend of mine said on one occasion, "When you are saved, you don't have a past. All things become new." He will present us as unreprouvable. That means there will be nothing to charge us with because of the power and competence of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin.

Since all of this is true, we are to be grounded and settled, never allowing Satan to move us from the hope of the Gospel. Because of it, we look forward to our future because of the hope we have through God's good news.

Tom Walker is President of Foothills Baptist Bible College and Pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Marion, NC.

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11

Rep. Meadows Sends Letter to Secretary Azar Urging Adoption of Medicare Part D Modernization Plan

Washington, D.C. — This week, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC) lead a letter with more than 100 co-signers to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar urging him to finalize the agency's proposal to modernize the Medicare Part D program, creating a more competitive marketplace to lower prescription drug prices for patients.

Many Americans are struggling with increasing out-of-pocket expenses for life-saving prescription drugs, in part because discounts negotiated by middlemen do not pass those savings on to beneficiaries in Medicare Part D plans and keep them instead. Because of this practice, patients pay a higher price when they fill their prescriptions at the pharmacy counter, instead of benefiting from the substantial savings provided by drug manufacturers to Part D Medicare plans negotiated by the middlemen. As such, patients access to life-saving prescription drugs decreases as the cost of prescription drugs continues to rise. This system lacks transparency and prices consumers out of the market, and it must be changed.

The Medicare Part D modernization plan proposed by the Trump Administration would be a strong step toward addressing this problem, significantly lowering patients' out-of-pocket expenses and promoting a more competitive marketplace for prescription drugs. It would allow patients to take advantage of discounted drug prices at the point-of-sale at the pharmacy counter, rather than having to foot the bill for an artificially high cost. The proposed reform takes the benefits of competition and negotiating directly to Americans and no longer forces them to pay the bill for market distortions on prescription drugs.

Ensuring Medicare Part D beneficiaries can take advantage of pharmaceutical manufacturer price discounts when they fill their prescriptions at the point-of-sale will be a major win for patients, while also preserving every market tool Medicare drug plans need to negotiate aggressively with pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Rep. Meadows' letter is signed by 106 additional members of Congress.

Meadows released the following statement on the letter:

"With the rapid increase in prescription drug spending, it is critical that we take meaningful steps to lower out-of-pocket costs of prescription drugs and improve access for patients," Meadows said. "Allowing patients to take advantage of an increase in competition and choice in the marketplace, as the administration's proposal does, will be an effective path forward for achieving those goals. Modernizing the Medicare Part D program will take the benefits of competition directly to the consumer. It will allow patients to see a negotiated cost of prescription drugs rather than a fixed price, not reflecting rebates and discounts under the Part D program."

President Trump and Secretary Azar have shown tremendous commitment and leadership toward lowering the cost of prescription drugs and finalizing their proposal will go a long way in seeing that mission through."



Congressman
Mark Meadows
202-225-6401
www.meadows.house.gov

NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net
919-733-5732

To recap - The Governor rejected the budget for the following reasons: the funding method for school construction and repair, it did not allocate enough funding for teacher pay raises, and it did not expand Medicaid. Rarely have we seen a Governor place specific demands on the budget process and further, stating that he will not sign a budget without his demands prior to the budget even being presented and released.

There are truly philosophical differences in the Governor's proposals and that of the General Assembly Republicans and some Democrat leaders.

Here are the differences in the three major demands the Governor put forward: (1) the Governor wants to fund school construction and repair with a multimillion-dollar bond. His original bond amount exceeded our debt capacity by \$2 billion. The General Assembly wants to pay for school construction and repair with "real cash money", and lots of it. The funding is available in "real cash" from the State Capital Infrastructure Fund; (2) the Governor wants 9% pay increase for teachers. The General Assembly recommended 3.9% average increase for teachers given that teacher pay has been a top priority for them, this will be the 6th consecutive year that teachers will be earning and receiving more; (3) the Governor wants to expand Medicaid statewide, and this would include bringing an estimated 500,000 onto the Medicaid rolls at a cost of \$6 billion over the next two years, which represents a 28% increase in Medicaid spending and a roughly 8% increase in total state spending. Within the last several budget cycles the Republicans have "fixed" the Medicaid cost overruns that were in the billions of dollars. Our Medicaid Program is now operating under budget and was transformed from a fee-for-service Medicaid program to a new Medicaid managed care program. This new program has just now been recently launched. The General Assembly views further Medicaid expansion as a policy decision that "should not hold up the budget whatsoever". To that end, they approved a provision in the budget for a special session to come back to consider Medicaid expansion after the state budget is enacted. So you can see the impasse between the Governor's demands and what the General Assembly believes is the best course for the entire state.

World War II veteran Sidney Walton is 100 years old, and he's in a bit of a race.

Walton, who served as an Army infantryman in the Asia Theater, is on a mission to travel to all 50 states and meet all 50 governors — and as many other people as he can along the way.

He landed in Raleigh on Sunday — North Carolina is his 22nd state — and met with N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper (and Cooper's "grand dog" Ben) at the Executive Mansion on Monday. He'll visit more North Carolina cities this week, including Fayetteville, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, High Point, and Blowing Rock, governor's mansion. He's calling his mission the No Regrets Tour. When he was younger, he had a chance to meet a Civil War veteran and he passed it up. He said has regretted it ever since.

Walton, a San Diego resident, visited The News & Observer office after leaving the governor's mansion. He's calling his mission the No Regrets Tour. When he was younger, he had a chance to meet a Civil War veteran and he passed it up. He said has regretted it ever since.

North Carolina House approves budget on Thursday, June 27 and Governor VETOES it on Friday, June 28.

Veto Blocks Bipartisan N.C. Budget Funds for Disaster Relief, Pay Raises, Public Safety, and School Construction.

NC Senate District 46

Legislation establishing new school safety initiatives for public schools in North Carolina was approved on Tuesday, July 23rd. Senate Bill 5 School Safety Omnibus, which I co-sponsored, requires public school systems to form threat assessment teams, evaluate the vulnerability of K-12 campuses, and conduct emergency drills to secure North Carolina classrooms.

It also clarifies the powers and duties of the Center for Safer Schools and requires county boards of education to report to state and local management officials during states of emergency.

S.B. 5 would require local boards of education to develop peer-to-peer support programs at all schools with grades six or higher. It also requires the placement of at least one trauma kit in each classroom of every school.

It further creates specific responsibilities for the Center for Safer Schools to serve as a resource and referral center on school safety concerns, provide training for public school personnel, and to collect, analyze, and disseminate data on school safety.

Training standards for School Resource Officers (SROs) must also be established by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission and the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards Commission under the legislation by January 15, 2020.

Those new training standards for SROs must be completed within one year of assignment to an education campus and include training on mental health, disabilities, racial equity, crisis intervention, and de-escalation.

The bill also provides \$1.5 million in state funds to the Department of Public Safety to continue implementation of a digital panic alarm application based on a May 2018 report of the Division of Emergency Management recommending the tool as a solution for campus security needs.

The funds were remaining from appropriations for the SpeakUp application, an anonymous tip tool that was fully funded by the state General Assembly and will be introduced in every North Carolina public school this fall.

Threat assessment teams formed by public schools must include persons with expertise in counseling, law enforcement, administration, and school psychology. Those teams would be required to report imminent threats to the State Bureau of Investigation and local mental health service providers.

Many of the school safety provisions in S.B. 5 were drawn from expert recommendations presented to the North Carolina House Select Committee on School Safety, which held a series of meetings in local communities across North Carolina last fall.



Sen. Warren Daniel
Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net
919-715-7823

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86

Budget Approved: Numerous Provisions Benefit Burke County

Last week the state legislature passed a budget for North Carolina for the next two years. As I mentioned in my recent newsletter, that process was nearing completion at that time. We now know of many provisions that I personally view favorably for the state, and some particularly of benefit to Burke County. I was pleased to support the passage of the budget. Here are some items that I would highlight. I will not attempt to go into detail. I will just give you brief descriptions. However, I am happy to respond in greater detail to anyone who may have questions.

- Continuation of annual teacher and principal raises with particular bonuses to teachers of 25 years or more
- Largest state employee raises in over a decade
- Retiree bonus supplement for each year
- Over \$5 million over the two-year budget period to provide for hiring staff and beginning operations at the new NC School of Science and Math campus in Morganton to be ready for students to enter in August of 2021
- Over \$3 million for additional staffing and expanded operations at the new Broughton Hospital in the second year of the budget
- \$91 million investment in school safety
- \$4.4 billion for school construction with more than \$15 million for Burke Public Schools and more than \$3 million for Western Piedmont
- \$15 million to fight the opioid epidemic
- \$6 million to clear the rape kit backlog
- \$15 million for grants to expand high-speed internet/broadband in unserved/underserved areas that could include parts of Burke County
- Investments in state parks and recreation, including \$2 million to help with planning and development of the new Wilderness Gateway Trail that affects Catawba and Burke counties
- \$39 million for clean water projects
- A new program to aid with suicide prevention for active military and veterans in North Carolina
- Tax reduction for all tax paying North Carolinians by a further increase in the standard deduction
- \$700 million added to the state's rainy day fund to almost fully replace the payments made out of those savings to deal with hurricanes or other natural disasters over the last couple of years
- Increased funding for the number of those with mental illness, developmental disabilities or substance abuse who may receive services in their local communities
- \$180,000 to fund a study for a Burke County site for a possible regional crisis intervention center to help divert individuals and provide treatment apart from hospital emergency departments or local jails
- Additional funding to aid seniors or those disabled so they might continue to live at home, such as better pay for aides and Meals on Wheels.
- Additional funding for better pay to better recruit and retain workers in assisted living facilities

Governor Cooper Vetoes Budget

Unfortunately, Governor Cooper immediately vetoed the budget. That means that the House and Senate will now need to vote to see if the legislature can override the veto so that the budget will become a law notwithstanding the governor's veto.

Legislative leaders on both the House and Senate sides say that Governor Cooper did not respond when they asked him before the passage of the budget with any counter-proposals on specific items. The governor says that the budget is simply bad in a variety of respects. It is my understanding that the governor will offer counter-proposals next week.

The governor's chief objection appears to be that the budget does not expand Medicaid coverage to additional adults. He says they need the coverage and that the federal government will almost entirely pay for it. Legislative leaders say that it would shift many able-bodied working adults from their current coverage to a program that the federal government is not obligated to continue paying for, especially given its trillions of dollars in debt. If the federal payments are eliminated, phased out or significantly reduced, Medicaid expansion could shift hundreds of millions of dollars in new expense to the state. Moreover, the expansion would add more patients to a state Medicaid system that already struggles to provide adequate numbers of doctors and other healthcare providers to meet the needs of the children, elderly and disabled who are already covered by Medicaid. Adding hundreds of thousands of additional patients may well reduce services available to those already covered.

The governor also criticizes new tax cuts for businesses in North Carolina. He would like to continue or raise taxes to have more money to spend. Legislative leaders say the tax cuts in this budget, along with those in previous budgets that Governor Cooper also criticized and vetoed, are among the sound budgeting decisions that attract and grow business, helping to explain North Carolina's budget surpluses of the last several years.

Finally, the governor criticized the legislature's decision to pay for school construction on a pay-as-you-go basis rather than the state issuing more bonded indebtedness to fund approximately the same level of construction.

I expect that each legislative body will vote on the possible override sometime next week. This is the third budget in a row that Governor Cooper has vetoed. The two previous budget vetoes were overridden. However, the governor's party gained seats in the legislature in 2018 with the possible result that sufficient votes for the override this year may not be available.



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805
Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net



Trump Economy Beats Expectations, One Month at a Time

Republican pro-growth policies continue to grow the U.S. economy and provide more opportunities for Americans

The U.S. economy under President Trump continues to beat expectations, giving Americans more opportunity. As a result of Republican-led tax reform and regulatory relief, our country is creating more jobs, increasing wages, and enjoying an unemployment rate near a 50-year low. Here are some of the banner headlines we've seen in just the last few weeks:

CNBC: Strong Job Growth Is Back: Payrolls Jump in June Well Above Expectations

• "Payroll growth rebounded sharply in June as the U.S. economy added 224,000 jobs, the best gain since January and running contrary to worries that both the employment picture and overgrowth picture was beginning to weaken."

National Review: Consumer Spending Beats Expectations in June, Allaying Economic Fears

• "Consumer spending was robust in June, beating expectations after a disappointing first-quarter stoked fears that the U.S. economy might be heading for a decline."

Bloomberg: U.S. Small Business Optimism Climbs to Highest in Seven Months

• "Optimism among small U.S. businesses rose to a seven-month high in May as companies increased capital spending plans, suggesting firms remain confident economic growth will continue."

New York Post: More Evidence the U.S. Economy is Growing in All the Most Important Ways

• "Wage growth remains strong, at above 3% year-over-year, for the 11th month in a row, as a tight labor market forces employers to share the wealth generated by solid Trump-era GDP growth."

With numbers like these, it's clear that Americans - and North Carolinians - are enjoying a strong, robust economy. I will continue supporting policies that ensure America's growth and innovation continues for years to come.

God Bless America

continued on page 14

Lighting Up The World

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

One of my children's favorite things about summertime is at night when the lighting bugs come out! These mysterious bugs are actually winged beetles that belong to the family called Lampyridae. Lampyridae comes from the Greek word "lapein" and it means to shine, like a lamp.

Lighting bugs or fireflies are nocturnal and make the summer evenings magical when they come out and start flashing their beautiful lights.

Most lightning bugs flash whenever they feel like it. These are the ones we have at our house. However, there is one type called Photinus Carolinus, that synchronize their flashes simultaneously meaning that all of them flash their lights at the same time. If you have never seen this type, but would like to, a great place to view them is at the Great Smokey National Park. They even offer tours to take you to see them.

These bugs are fascinating! Lighting up is how they talk to one another. Each species has their own light pattern. The males will signal their pattern that they are single and the females will flash a specific sequence if they are interested.

Scientists consider these bugs alchemists because they can take the chemical, luciferin, found in their tail, mix it with oxygen, calcium, and adenosine triphosphate to create their glowing light. This chemical reaction known as chemiluminescence, allows them to glow without wasting heat energy. One hundred percent of this energy creates a light, unlike our man-made incandescent light bulb. This light bulb creates more heat than light.

Different species create different colors. Glowing lightning bugs may be yellow, light red, green, or orange. Except for the ones that live in the western United States they do not light up the sky at all.

These glowing bugs are considered bioluminescent which is the word used for creatures that produce light. Only a few other earthbound insects have this gift, including click beetles and railroad worms.

Fireflies also use their light to attract prey and to warn off predators. Predators learn not to eat them because of their terrible taste. Fireflies have a defensive steroid in their blood called lucibufagins that makes them taste gross. So gross, that predators remember it and connect the glowing light with the bad taste.

Some lightning bug eggs and larvae even glow under the earth's surface! These underground babies are carnivorous, feeding off of slugs, snails, and worms.

There is a firefly species that even lives in the water when they are babies! They have gills like fish and eat water snails. However, when grown, most lightning bugs eat pollen and nectar but there are a few that are cannibals.

Once these beetles crawl out of the ground they are adults and live about two months in the summer. There are 2,000 lightning bug species in the world and 150 of these reside in North America.

Do you like to watch and catch fireflies in the cool summer nights? It was one of my favorite things to do growing up. I loved to keep them in my critter cage and watch them on my dresser top before I went to sleep. They would light up all night and then in the morning, I would let them loose.

It is not amazing that God created a bug that can glow in the dark? Did you know that you have a light that you can shine for Jesus? It is really Him shining through you. You can let your light shine by letting God use you and by giving Him the glory for everything that happens to you. You can also give Him the glory by staying humble and giving Him the credit when you use your talents and gifts that He gave you. A few other examples would be acting Christ-like, standing up for Jesus, and simply doing what is right. Showing your light in this dark world will be hard, but as Christians, we must do it to spread the good news of Jesus to unbelievers. You may be made fun of or bullied when you tell others that you are a Christian, but don't be afraid! God is with you. Jesus went through the same thing when He came to earth and died for our sins. Will you stand up and shine your light in this dark world for Jesus? Will you light up the world?

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Matthew 5:14 ESV

"For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" Ephesians 5:8 ESV

Dear Lord, please help us to choose to light up the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. We pray that in all that we do, others will see You and Your glory glowing in us. Help us remember that everything that happens to us, and our gifts and talents all belong to You. They are not our own. Help us stay strong in our Christian beliefs. In Jesus's name, Amen.

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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCL. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. If you enjoy her books, 'like' her author page on Facebook and let her know! You can buy her books at https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank You can reach her at <https://www.facebook.com/authorChristyLowman/> or christysoaps@yahoo.com.



What Kind of Neighbor Am I?

By Tracey Jessup

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" — Luke 10:36-37



During the past several months, the President's Council on Christian Mission and Identity has been working on various initiatives that will strengthen the University's visible Christian witness. One initiative is the mounting of plaques with the words of Jesus from Mark 12:29-31 at the entrance to all campus buildings. At the request of the Tucker Family, such a plaque has adorned the entrance of the Tucker Student Center since its dedication. Bob and Carolyn Tucker have given a similar plaque to all their children and grandchildren to place at the entrance of their homes, and they wanted the building that bears their name on our campus to be reminded of that same commitment.

Such was the inspiration for this initiative of the President's Council. It is our prayer that whenever we enter any and every building on this campus, we will be reminded of the call of God upon our lives as followers of Christ in this community of faith and learning. "The first of the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

These words express the greatest commandments according to Jesus - the love of God and love of neighbor. Furthermore, these words are central to the motto of Gardner-Webb University - "For God and Humanity." The mention of the word "neighbor" reminds me of a story Jesus told and the context of today's passage, which parallel the words of Jesus in Mark 12:29-31 and include the greatest commandments. Most of us know it as the story of the Good Samaritan. A man traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho falls into the hands of robbers, is beaten, and then left to die. A priest and Levite traveling the same road, see the man but pass by on the other side. But a Samaritan saw the man and had compassion on him.

What one may not remember is that Jesus tells this story in response to a question from an expert in the law. He asks Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). While this appears to be a genuine question, one cannot help but wonder if the expert in the law is looking to limit the realm of his involvement and influence. In other words, how far does this neighborly love extend? However, after Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan the question worth considering and asked by Jesus is not "Who is my neighbor?" but rather "What kind of a neighbor am I?"

Commenting on this passage, Amanda Brobst-Renaud writes, "The image of God is borne by the one in the ditch. The image of God is reflected by the one who shows compassion and mercy. Those who pass by also bear the indelible mark of the Creator, inasmuch as the Bible reminds us that even when we turn away, God draws near to us" ("Commentary on Luke 10:25-37," workingpreacher.org).

Prayer: Lord, when life leads us into the ditch, help us be true to Your claim upon our lives by loving You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Dr. Tracy Jessup serves as vice president for Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. He is a graduate of Gardner-Webb with a B.A. in Music and earned his M. Div. degree at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He also teaches in the undergraduate department of religious studies and enjoys the opportunity to serve the local church through interim pastorates, pulpit supply, and preaching revival services. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children, Christian and Anna.



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Peter's Pride

By Alan Griffin

Simon, also named Peter the Apostle, was born Simon Bar-Jonah or Simon son of Jonah, and his name was later shortened to just Peter, which means petros or rock. The first time Jesus met Peter face-to-face He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah, you shall be called Cephas," which translates into the word "stone." From that time on he was called Rock or Peter. This young man named Peter was impulsive, impetuous, and overeager in his nature so the name Jesus gave him was something he would become through the trials and tribulations he encountered as a disciple for Christ. Jesus still called him Simon sometimes when we were exposing his un-degenerated personality.

One of the most wonderful sayings in the Bible is when Jesus said to Peter and Andrew his brother "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Peter and Andrew dropped their nets and followed Jesus, giving up their business, their wives, and their families to follow Christ to the cross. Peter is like a lot of us who turn to Christ. We are so excited to help we rely on our own ability, and with Christ this is impossible. Peter had a lot of good traits to go with the bad ones. He showed initiative and inquisitiveness, but what he lacked was faith. He was bold, decisive, and brave, but when he let his ability take control of his thinking, he would soon discover he had bitten off more than he could chew.

Peter surrendered everything he had to Christ, and he was a man of obedience, but his self-will—trusting in his own wisdom and forbidding Christ to die on the cross—received a very strong rebuke. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:22-23). At the same time, Peter had the Holy Spirit of God within when Christ asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:15-17).

Peter at times sought after his own honor even at a cost to other disciples around him. He bragged how he would defend Christ to the death, so Christ revealed to him that he would deny Jesus three times before morning. Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:34-35). Jesus tried to show Peter he was living the self-life when He proclaimed, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:24-25). We must utterly deny ourselves if we are going to follow Christ.

When Jesus was arrested Peter refused to admit he knew Jesus. He boldly proclaimed, "I have nothing to do with Him; He and I are not friends; I deny having any connection with Him," and just a few hours before Peter proclaimed, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be. If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (Mark 14:29, 31). Many times, this is our own behavior when we are around friends that are not Christians. We are more concerned about what other people think about us than God. We place our own self-interest above what is right, and this, my friend, is what is wrong with the entire world. Self before God. The self-life is what gives sin its power, and Christ is what gives us the power of God. The pride of the self-life caused the fall of Satan, and if we continue living for ourselves it will cause our fall as well. In the beginning, Lucifer wanted something for himself, he wanted to be above the throne of God, and in the beginning, Eve wanted something for herself, so our parents fell into sin. Through our heritage, we receive the nature of sin, and until we turn away from the life of self, we will all die the death of our spiritual beings. In fact, until we turn to Christ and renounce our own personal intentions, we are all dead in our trespasses and sin. Now when Peter realized what he had done he went out and cried bitterly. I have been in this exact location in my life, and when I look back, I realize this is when the tremendous change came over me. I stopped living for myself and started living for Christ. Can you imagine what Peter went through the following hours of that night, and the next day when Jesus was beaten and crucified? The pain of his failings must have haunted him severely. Everything he had committed his life to over the last three years was gone. This was the turning point in Peter's life, and on the first day of the week, Peter saw the resurrected Jesus.

Later, at the lake of Galilee, the disciples sat on the beach one morning and ate fish for breakfast with Jesus, and there beside the fire Christ asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (John 21:15-17).

Christ took Peter from death to eternal life, and the nature in Peter changed from a self-nature to an eternal and divine nature of God. Some fifty days later at Pentecost, Peter preached one of the most magnificent sermons ever given (Acts 2:14-38) and three thousand souls were saved. In 1 Peter we read, "For this is why you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to




sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Before Peter denied Christ, he cast out demons and healed the sick, but the power of the flesh was still in him. So, although we have never accomplished such great feats in Christ, even more, are we controlled by the flesh. We see how Christ led Peter to overcome his pride and started to perfect him in his sermon at Pentecost. Jesus is here with me and there with you waiting to perform the same miracle in us that he performed in Peter. He is waiting for you to step aside from your own ability and trust in the ability of almighty God.

Why are there no more blessings in your life? Because we have not given over to the Holy Spirit what is His, our life in complete surrender, and our trust in Christ's finished work. Dear heavenly Father forgive me for my selfish shortcomings in denying the Holy Spirit His true place in my life. I have allowed my self-life to grieve the Spirit of God, and I stand before You now asking You to remove the self out of my life and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I cry out to You for forgiveness, Lord. In Jesus Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

Alan Griffin started the kidsnchrist ministries in November 1997. He has worked with inner city kids for 21 years. He found a need for specialized Biblical literature that would reach people of all ages and has been writing since 2005. The ministry has expanded their websites to reach around the world. Kidsnchrist.com, millennialchristian.com, teensnchrist.com, seniorsnchrist.com, picture-verse.com, and soulworks-smallgroups.com. We had an outreach of over 13,000,000 people last year with 36,000,000 impressions. If you have any questions for Alan you can reach him at alan@kidsnchrist.com



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Warm Arms Wrapped Around You

By Carolyn Dotts
Mitchell County

"Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering." Have you or someone you know recently lost someone you love? Perhaps it is a family member—a parent, a sibling, a spouse or even a child. Or you may have lost a close friend. Losing someone through death, whether expected or sudden, immediately results in shock, closely followed by grief. At first, the shock is a welcome insulator, providing a feeling of numbness that protects you from the overwhelming pain of sorrow and loss. A feeling of surrealism can engulf you for a period of time. As the shock fades, grief is waiting. Many people facing this grief can find loving support and recovery with others who are also walking this journey. Grief tends to isolate you in a time when you desperately need to connect with others who understand the deep pain and can help answer some of the many questions you may have. GriefShare, sponsored by Western Carolina Church, is one such support available in Mitchell County.

I first heard of GriefShare when I lost my husband in a car accident over 13 years ago. It referenced the website in a book I was reading about the process of grieving. When you pull up the website, it offers valuable resources, such as a list of GriefShare meetings within a specified radius of your home. GriefShare groups meet all across the United States and Canada, as well as internationally. Another helpful feature of the website is a daily encouraging email message you can sign up to receive each day of the year. There is also a bookstore offering books, CDs and video on grief and recovery topic, many of which are written by some of the expert authors, counselors, speakers and pastors who are featured in the video seminars. A six-week personal study called Help for the Journey is also available on the website. Another section discusses the various topics presented in each video.

In a typical GriefShare session participants view a professionally-produced video seminar featuring notable experts in grief and the recovery process. During the video, which lasts from 30-45minutes, viewers may take notes in the guidebook which is used for all 13 sessions. It also contains devotions that can be completed prior to the next session. Discussion and questions follow the video. Participants may choose to speak or just listen but be assured that confidentiality is valued. Many participants have attended both fall and spring sessions because they have shared that the second time around yields information, they missed during the first viewing.

The GriefShare fall session will begin on Thursday, August 15th at Western Carolina Church. It begins at 6:00 PM and a light meal will be served. It will continue for 13 consecutive weeks, ending on November 7th. On Saturday, November 9th, the Surviving the Holidays seminar will also be offered. More information about this seminar will be addressed in a future issue of BRCN. If you are interested or know someone who may benefit from GriefShare, please call Carolyn Dotts at 828- 467-1433 for more information or to register.

Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a teacher of Exceptional Children at Greenlee Primary School. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.



Stories-Survival Guides

Compiled by God
By Marlene Houk
Burke County

The Falcon, a compact six-passenger, mileage-maker Ford car, produced in the 1960s, became my dad's car of choice for his four teenage children, three girls, and one boy. In a ten-year span, we all learned to drive his Ford Falcons. I remember he bought four of them and most housed the three-speed gear shift on the column behind the steering wheel, straight drives. He would buy it; we would wreck it. Then he would buy another one whose destiny proved to be the same: dents, broken headlights, and loose bumpers. At one time, all four of us wrecked the same car, a beautiful shiny, champagne-colored 1964 Ford Falcon.

When my children learned to drive, I wondered how in the world my dad had retained his sanity, not to mention his patience. And how did he clampdown that fear as he was racing to the hospital to see the damage done? My older sister passed out when she turned the car upside down in a field on Highway 64. My older brother ditched one of the Falcons driving up a mountain to his fire-tower operator job. My turn provided me with only a scratch and one small bump, but my younger sister didn't fare so well with her lower teeth knocked out. I always admired my dad for remaining calm and unflappable during those times. His ability to cope gave me hope when my own children learned to drive. I felt that if my dad could survive the fear, panic, and frustration, perhaps I, who came from his stock, could do the same.

My dad's story became my survival guide, and I clung to his experience with all the hope that I could muster for more quiet times.

A saying I discovered recently summarizes how our stories offer hope like my dad's tales of his children's driving escapades became my mantra as a parent of teen drivers.

One day you will tell your story of how you've overcome what you're going through now, and it will become part of someone else's survival guide.

This reminds me of 2 Corinthians 1:4 which says, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." God does not waste our pain or sorrow but carefully gifts our stories to others so that they can learn from the ways that God enabled us to triumph over our trials.

God also uses this method when He tells epic stories of men and women of gigantic faith in the Bible who inspire us to focus on the Lord in our own trials and to glean wisdom and faith from His Word. Our Bible heroes and heroines offer hope to us as they conquer enormous enemies, fight courageously in death-defying battles, and wait poignantly for decades for God's promises to be fulfilled.

God gave us their stories for us to have an example to follow. It says in Romans 15:4 "for whatsoever things were written, aforetime were written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." That's why God put these divine dramas in His Bible – to give us hope, to give us patience and comfort, and to give us a way out of our valleys.

For example, David and Goliath is an incredible story where David teaches me to completely eradicate my enemy (the devil) by using God as my rock. Esther teaches me what to wear to a crisis. Ruth is a manual for helping a friend through grief, and Abigail teaches us how to diffuse anger in ten simple steps.

I hear the gears in that old Ford Falcon, sometimes grinding under the hands of an awkward teen or perhaps jolting to a stalling stop as he forgot to let in the clutch. And I realize that the Lord uses both biblical narratives and stories from my family, church, and friends, to send His truths into my heart.

Find a story in a Christian's life, either current or biblical, that can become your survival guide. Listen carefully as they relate their David and Goliath tale and leave with a fresh vision of how God works through others' stories to help you on your journey of faith!



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Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to Blue Ridge Christian News. Her passion is to delve deeply into the truths of Bible women and to discuss those in Bible Studies called Backstage Pass to Bible Women. She and her husband discover joy, nurture, and challenge in their church. Her contact is marlenehouk@bellsouth.net



Jamie Miller, CPA

Jamie M. Miller, CPA, PLLC

1136 Greenwood Road Spruce Pine, NC 28777	2301 Rutherford Road Marion, NC 28752
phone: 828.765.4400 fax: 828.765.4880	phone: 828.652.6777 fax: 828.652.6755

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Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church

The Half Was Not Told Me

By Patricia Jackson
McDowell County

Our Ladies Sunday School Class, at Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church, continues to study the life of Solomon. In I Kings, Chapter 10, Verse 1, we read "That the Queen of Sheba had heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions." The name of Solomon and his great wisdom and the great God of Israel had spread all over the eastern world. The queen of Sheba was from the South, possibly Ethiopia, and a woman of great means herself, as seen by the valuable gifts she brings to King Solomon. She wanted to see for herself the wisdom that Solomon was reputed to have. She was also interested in setting up a trade arrangement with this very wealthy and prosperous man and nation. The queen of Sheba spoke with Solomon about all that was in her heart, and Solomon was very gracious toward her, answering all of her questions. I have to wonder since she was so wealthy and important, that perhaps she could not believe the stories that someone was more famous and prosperous than she was and wanted to know for sure.

In Verse 7, the queen of Sheba states "Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame which I heard". She realized what she had previously heard was nowhere near the full story regarding the wisdom of Solomon, the wealth, prosperity, the temple of God, palaces, gold, etc.

As I studied these scriptures and tried to visualize all the splendor and grander resulting from Solomon's building, I remembered the Biltmore Mansion in Asheville. I have visited several times in the past, and each time I realize that I cannot begin to describe to anyone else the half of what I observed of all the splendor and magnificence. It is the largest privately-owned home in the United States, having 250 rooms.

When we get to heaven, I believe this is the way we will look at Jesus, as we behold Him, the glory of the Throne Room and God himself. Surely what we have read in the scriptures regarding heaven and our limited visual imagination, we will realize that we have only heard the half of it!

When I visited the Biltmore Mansion, I was required to purchase a ticket. But if you are saved by the marvelous grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, you already have a ticket to Heaven. Jesus paid the price for you and me on the cross a long time ago!

When I visited the Biltmore Mansion, I was a visitor, passing through, only there for a few hours. But when we get to heaven, we won't be a visitor, it will be our permanent home and all the beauty will be there for us to enjoy forever. We will stay for eternity!! The queen of Sheba journeyed to Solomon's kingdom, seeking answers regarding his wisdom, wealth and his God. "She heard the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord". The journey she took was long and arduous, however, when we repent of our sins and call upon the name of the Lord, we will be saved. This is our ticket to heaven!! How much more should people today seek Jesus and the glory of his Kingdom?

V.8 "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and that hear thy wisdom". The Queen of Sheba recognizes that the servants of Solomon who constantly hear his wisdom are 'blessed.' That's an important thing for us to think about. We are blessed to sit in the pews with a spiritual pastor to share with us his wisdom from God. Could others say that about us? Are we a blessing to them with our words and the way we live our lives? In V.9, we read that the Lord delighted in Solomon because the Lord loved Israel forever. Just as God has loved Israel forever, he will also love us forever IF we keep his commandments and do his will.

Until we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior, we won't know "the half" of the beauty and magnificence of heaven. I want to experience that beauty firsthand, for all eternity, by living according to His laws and commandments.

Patricia Jackson is the Assistant Teacher for the Ladies Class at Redeemed Free Will Baptist Church, Glenwood, NC. She is a grant writer for non-profits, a published author and retired Nursing Home Administrator. She lives in Rutherford County with her husband.



For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12



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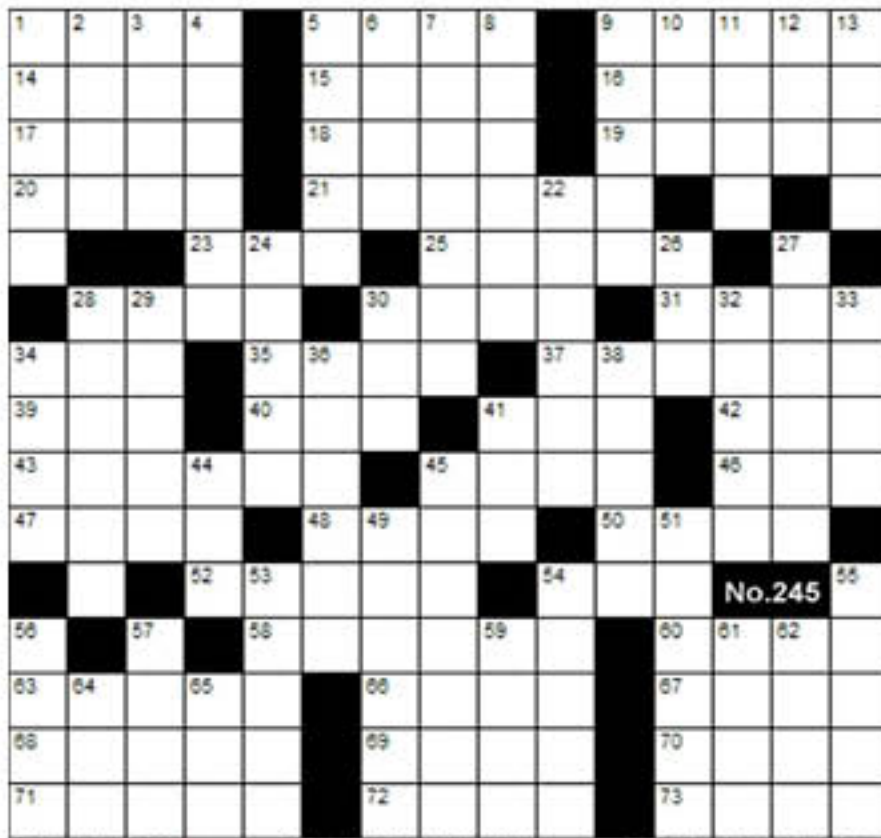
1 Take heed that ye do not your _____ before men (Matt 6:1) KJV
 5 The fear of the LORD _____ length to life (Prov 10:27)
 9 As a shepherd _____ his garment around him (Jer 43:12)
 14 not during the Feast or there may be a _____ among the people (Matt 26:5)
 15 Rescue me from the _____, do not let me sink (Ps 69:14)
 16 they get into the _____ of being idle (1 Tim 5:13)
 17 the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, _____, Zepho (Gen 36:11)
 18 abbr. for the 20th book of the O.T.
 19 I am the Alpha and the _____, the Beginning and the End (Rev 21:6)
 20 They left _____ Jaakan and camped at Hor (Num 33:32)
 21 Heal the sick, cleanse the _____, raise the dead (Matt 10:8) KJV
 23 he does not _____ away from the sword (Job 39:22)
 25 He has given _____ of this to all men by raising him (Acts 17:31)
 28 Moses brought their _____ before the LORD (Num 27:5)
 30 Do not associate with him, in order that he may _____ ashamed (2 Thess 3:14)
 31 it is a _____ thing that the king requireth (Dan 2:11) KJV
 34 Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living _____" (Matt 16:16)
 35 Why have you repaid _____ with evil? (Gen 44:4)
 37 They will be _____ and plundered by all their foes (2 Kings 21:14)
 39 Eber, Misham, Shemed who built _____ and Lod (1 Chron 8:12)
 40 Come, you who _____ blessed by the LORD (Gen 24:31)
 41 the LORD drove the _____ back with a strong east wind (Exod 14:21)
 42 and now _____ greater than Jonah is here (Matt 12:41)
 43 in God I trust; I will not be _____ (Ps 56:4)
 45 get a new _____ ready, with two cows (1 Sam 6:7)
 46 A brother offended is harder to be _____ than a strong city (Prov 18:19)
 47 things full of marrow, of wines on the _____ well refined (Isa 25:6) KJV
 48 But among the Israelites not _____ will bark (1,3) (Exod 11:7)
 50 Esau went to the field to _____ for venison (Gen 27:5)
 52 establish a royal statute, and to make _____ decree (1,4) (Dan 6:7) KJV
 54 transportation beast (Matt 21:2) KJV
 58 Take with you seven of every kind of clean _____ (Gen 7:2)
 60 Men at _____ have contempt for misfortune (Job 12:5)
 63 subject, issue
 66 The owl will _____ there and lay eggs (Isa 34:15)
 67 ye shall _____, like as ye fled from before the earthquake (Zech 14:5) KJV
 68 _____ siege works against it, build a ramp up to it (Ezek 4:2)
 69 that at the name of Jesus

every _____ should bow (Phil 2:10)
 70 with their tongues they have _____ deceit (Rom 3:13)
 71 Your kingdom is divided and given to the _____ and Persians (Dan 5:28)

72 the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning _____ (Rev 22:16)
 73 Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the _____ of all things (Phil 3:8)

DOWN

1 David was clothed in _____ of fine linen (1,4) (1 Chron 15:27)
 2 he burned the bones of the king of Edom into _____ (Amos 2:1) KJV
 3 We all growl like bears; we _____ mournfully like doves (Isa 59:11)
 4 And I want you to _____ these things (Titus 3:8)
 5 I am _____ supplied, now that I have received (Phil 4:18)
 6 in nakedness and _____ poverty, you will serve the enemies (Deut 28:48)
 7 they _____ four anchors from the stern and prayed (Acts 27:29)
 8 for the famine was _____ throughout Egypt (Gen 41:56)
 9 _____ loveth instruction loveth knowledge (Prov 12:1) (KJV)
 10 Also a bullock and a _____ for peace offerings (Lev 9:4)
 11 room on the roof and put in it _____ and a table (1,3) (2 Kings 4:10)
 12 The _____ is also unclean; although it has a split hoof (Deut 14:8)
 13 When he prophesies, his own parents will _____ him (Zech 13:3)
 22 shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a _____ to bind it (Ezek 30:21) KJV
 24 Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to _____ (Est 2:8)
 26 Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and _____ (Ps 39:6)
 27 "You _____ one of his disciples, are you?" (3,3) (John 18:17)
 28 I _____ on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one (Luke 22:29)
 29 your love more than wine. How right they are to _____ you (Song 1:4)
 30 For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the _____ (Ps 61:3)
 32 Jesus could no longer enter _____ openly (1,4) (Mark 1:45)
 33 a river went out of _____ to water the garden (Gen 2:10)
 34 I press on toward the _____ to win the prize (Phil 3:14)
 36 In this way you shall _____ Aaron and his sons (Ex 29:9)
 38 They make many promises, take false _____ and make (Hos 10:4)
 41 If a man is lazy, the rafters _____ (Eccl 10:18)
 44 If ye have faith _____ grain of mustard seed (2,1) (Matt 17:20) KJV
 45 remark, statement
 49 Everyone who _____ this water will be thirsty again (John 4:13)
 51 Scripture is God-breathed



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and is _____ for teaching (2 Tim 3:16)
 53 since these _____ are undeniable, you ought to be quiet (Acts 19:36)
 54 I will not violate my covenant or _____ what (Ps 89:34)
 55 proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful _____ (Ps 26:7)
 56 there shall come forth a rod out of the _____ of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1)
 57 The creatures _____ back and forth like flashes of

lightning (Ezek 1:14)
 59 I saw what looked like _____ of glass mixed with fire (1,3) (Rev 15:2)
 61 The soldiers _____ came up and mocked him (Luke 23:36)
 62 Go, post a lookout and have him report what he _____ (Isa 21:6)
 64 material taken from King Solomon's mines
 65 what looked like an expanse, sparkling like _____, and awesome (Ezek 1:22)

Solution on page 14

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The Inspiring Word

A Study of Jesus Parables - An introduction By Terry Cheek McDowell County



For August will you join me in a new series of articles. Our Lord and Savior spoke wonderful words of salvation, forgiveness, and encouragement while He walked the earth. Some of His teachings were done in parables and beginning this month I want to invite you to join me in a study of them.

To begin with, it is important we understand what a parable is. If nothing else gets explained in this month's article, I hope to leave you with a better understanding of our study and most importantly the teaching of Jesus Christ through parables.

Parables are not isolated to the words of Jesus and the New Testament, the Old Testament itself contains parables as well. We may visit some Old Testament parables as well when we finish the spoken word of Christ. For now, let's take a quick look at the parable. A parable is nothing more than a figure of speech. And, the principal function of a figure of speech is to communicate ideas. We find parables in the form of similes, metaphor's, and similitudes also there are simple stories that qualify as parables. The story-parable was the one most often used by Christ.

We find the word parable interpreting the Greek word "parabole" which is also translated as a proverb in Luke 4:23. Yet Luke 4:23 will be one of the parables we study. I share this not to confuse you, but to show you there is knowledge in words and how they are used. This is important to know as we move forward with this study.

Why would Christ want to use a parable? After all, they can be rather tricky to understand. Christ himself answers this question in Matthew 13:10-17. From this passage, we learn that Christ used parables to pass along knowledge to some yet hide it from others. Upon first reading, this sounds rather cruel. Jesus sheds light on this from Matthew 13:11-13 KJV "He answered and said unto them because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them, it is not given. (12) For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. (13) Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Christ speaks in parables because there were two types of people listening to Him, those who believe in Him and those who don't. The believers need to be disciplined but the unbelievers do not need their confusion increased. An unbeliever has enough to be responsible for, adding to that burden would be unkind, to say the least. So, we know that Jesus teaches in parables to disciple His believers and show grace to the unbeliever.

Quoting Dwight Pentecost "In order to properly interpret the parables, one must observe certain principles. The first principle, one that the Lord Himself stated, is that the parables concerned "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11). The kingdom of heaven is that sphere over which the sovereign God rules... A second important principle in interpretation is to observe the immediate context. Parables were never spoken in a vacuum. In each instance that Christ spoke a parable, He was explaining some question or problem that His hearers were facing. Each parable thus was designed to solve a problem or to answer a question.... This will lead to a third important principle of interpretation; namely, the parable itself must be studied to determine what is the point at issue.... There is a fourth principle. Since a parable transfers truth from the known to the unknown realm, the interpreter must study the item or matter in the parable to which allusion is made and from which truth is to be transferred.... It is impossible to discover the truth in a parable by superimposing our culture on the culture of Christ's environment. The interpreter of parables, then, must become thoroughly conversant with the history, geography, culture, and customs of biblical times." Of all the parables given by Christ, only two were interpreted by Him, the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds.

This introduction to our study may not be what you were really expecting but I assure you as we get deeper into it you be glad to have this information. Join us in September as we begin unpacking the parables of Jesus Christ. Until then may God keep you firmly in His grip and bless your daily walk with Him.

1J. Dwight Pentecost. The Parables of Jesus: Lessons in Life from the Master Teacher (Kindle Locations 161-163). Kindle Edition.

Terry is the Executive Director and broadcaster of The Inspiring Word media ministry. You can contact Terry by email at theinspiringword@gmail.com Or by visiting www.theinspiringword.org

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Choice and Consequence

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



One day last week after dropping the boys off at school I was driving from Bakersville towards Ledger. My mind was wandering about studying for the next Sunday's sermon when I noticed a state trooper doing a very abrupt u-turn in front of me.

You see, as I was coming through metropolitan Bakersville a lady in a small SUV pulled out in front of me. She was obviously in a hurry and needed to get in front of me! The brakes on my car did the job and I was able to avoid getting too close to her. If this had happened years ago, I would have probably blown the car horn and got all red-faced and stuff. But since I'm all spiritual now, that behavior is avoided, lol! Anyway, the lady was traveling along in front of me until we left the city limits and she let the gas fumes roll if you know what I mean. Her speed was well above the limit because she was way ahead of me when we reached a long straightaway. That's where the trooper did his u-turn.

The first thing I did was check my speed. Thankfully I was doing the speed limit. As I left the straight away and rounded a curve the trooper had the lady pulled over, obviously for speeding. Well, I was thankful it wasn't me because I never speed.... I mean very seldom speed.... I mean hardly ever speed.... well, sometimes I speed and I have gotten caught, there you have it, OK!

Now for everyone out there reading this that has been pulled over, you know what I mean when I talk about that feeling you have when those blue lights are flashing behind you. Now let's all be honest, first, we realize we have been caught and the next thought in our mind is how are we going to get out of this? What excuse can we give the police officer about why we were speeding? For certain, police officers have heard it all. Even though many of us chose to break the law, for some reason we do not want to suffer the consequences that come with that choice. Somehow, we want the consequences to be taken away. We do not want to pay the fine, go to court, or see our insurance premiums increase, even though we chose to break the law, and we knew the possible consequences.

Every day of our lives we are faced with choices. Obviously, as Christians, I believe that the Lord Jesus wants us to make choices that will glorify Him, show others we are followers of Christ, and benefit ourselves, our families, and those around us. All too often we blame God with things that have happened in our lives when what is going on is simply the consequences of the choices we have made. Many times, I have counseled with people who have chosen to do exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches. After making those choices, they call me or another pastor and somehow want us to be able to take away the consequences of their choices. Husbands or wives commit adultery, and then wonder why their marriage and family has dissolved. Young people chose to be involved in pre-marital sex, or take drugs, etc., and then when the consequences come, they somehow want them erased. Now before someone has me "strung up" as an old hateful and judgmental preacher let me clarify some things.

First, I believe that God loves us and forgives us when we fail Him and even when we just make some flat-out stupid choices in life. Secondly, I believe that we as Christians are to be loving and forgiving also. When people mess up and make wrong choices, we state the truth of their choices and how those choices have ended in the consequences that are now enduring. We love and restore them just as the Lord would and just like we would want them to do for us. However, we cannot erase the consequences that have resulted because of the wrong choice that was made. Sometimes consequences last for a few days, weeks, years, and even a lifetime. Even though God will forgive the sin when confessed, the consequences of that sin are something one will have to live with for a long time in this life.

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 8:24-27 *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And when the rain descended, and floods came, and winds blew, and beat upon that house; it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and floods came, and winds blew, and beat upon that house; it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

We cannot expect to make choices in life that are contrary to God's word and not suffer the consequences that will come. Let us be found as wise men and build our lives upon the teachings of scriptures. The wisdom you and I need to live this life is found in the Word of God through His Son Jesus. Let us make wise choices, for every choice has a consequence, good or bad!

P.S. Watch your speed!

Preacher Chris Rathbone serves as Pastor at Mine Creek Baptist Church.



Blossoms and Songs in Unseen Places

By Ken & Jan Merop
Avery County



Have you ever gone caving or hiked a mile up a mountain?

Though I've never gone caving ~ as in crawling into a hole in the side of a mountain and exploring ~ I have gone on guided tours of caves and found them fascinating.

Yet, it is still not my favorite adventure ~ being underground in the side of a mountain. However, caves hold beautiful, impressive secrets.

The darkness, dirt and dank coolness must spell adventure and discovery for spelunkers. Without them, we wouldn't know about the incredible stalactites and stalagmites that hang down and stick up in splendid, artistic formations.

It causes us to wonder. Why such beauty in virtually unseen places?

Hiking for me is far more enjoyable.

I love being outdoors and breathing in the pristine air of the mountains. I delight in the openness and freedom I feel. Climbing to heights that open to unimaginably majestic vistas are sure rewards.

The mile-high hike was grueling. But there was much beauty along the way with a stream rippling alongside the steep path we were on. But, at the top, beauty beyond our hopes awaited.

A plateau of the clearest lake I'd ever seen fed by a thundering waterfall took our breath away. This same waterfall continuously fed the stream that had been splashing and dancing alongside us as we climbed.

The highway below is not visible from this protected, circular environment. People drive by unaware of the hidden beauty. Yet, the music of the waterfall never stops singing whether anyone hears it or not.

God, the Creator of all things, places beauty in unseen places ~ because. He is inherently beautiful and whether we can see it or not, He creates it. And, then, should we happen upon it, we are blessed, inspired and awed. His winsome artistry declares His glory ~ much like the night sky that is far denser with stars and planets than our natural eye can see.

Whether in the bosom of the earth or atop a mountain peak, the joy of it all is that we can never escape His presence. As Psalm 139: 7a-8a, in The Message, asks, *"Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there!"*

His beauty is all-encompassing, and he never sleeps. Whether we see Him in action or not, even unseen places declare His glory; and, we can declare with the Psalmist, *"In Your presence is fullness of joy."* Selah

BLOOM WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED

*Rushing waters from the falls zoom by.
Songs of intensity fill the air.*

Yet, this tiny bloom seems unaffected.

It has been assigned to bloom in that spot...

And so it does...gently and gracefully.

*Let's bloom in the midst of our circumstances
so that others may know that joy equals strength.*

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Nehemiah 8: 10b



Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @ pauseandconsider.net, Journeying with Jan; and Ken's photos at kenmeropphotography.com. kenmeropphotography.com is currently off-line. But Ken's photos can still be seen at ken-merop.pixels.com.

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Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Thank God For His Holy Spirit

By Steve Williams
Mitchell County

There was a famous commercial years ago. "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what-a-relief-it-is." The commercial advertised Alka-Seltzer, a medicine designed to help with an upset stomach. Alka-Seltzer would be triggered by dropping the two tablets into water and when they enter the water they started fizzing and fizzing like a volcano. When people accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, God drops the Holy Spirit into their new lives. The Holy Spirit's presence is designed to bring change into our upset lives, upset minds, and upset circumstances. God did this so we could discover "Oh-what-a-relief-He-is."

I am so thankful for the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. It's the Holy Spirit that convicted me that I was a sinner in need of a Savior. It was the Holy Spirit that gave me a New Life when He entered my heart when I was saved. He gave me, New Eyes, New Ears, New Mind, New Ways, New Job, and most of all a New Love to experience and to share with others. Oh, how we need the Holy Spirit presence in our lives.

If you think about it the Holy Spirit is so important in the lives of Christians. The Holy Spirit to a Christian is like Oxygen is to a human being. It's like this when a deep-sea diver enters the water with tanks on their backs. These tanks hold oxygen. The purpose of these tanks strapped to their back is so that they can make it in a foreign world. Sea water is not their natural habitat: it's not the normal place for them to live, so for them to survive in this foreign world of water, they need to be connected to a life source from their real world in order to make it in that world. In other words, if they get disconnected from the air in this world, they won't last long in that world. Their connection is the key to their survival because they weren't meant to live in water. So, they borrow from this world in order to live in that world.

That life source in the life of a Christian is the Holy Spirit. God has given the Christian a life source because this world to the Christian is foreign territory. In order to live here and make it, you need to be connected to a life source from your real world. See if you get disconnected from your real-world, you want to make it in this world as a Christian follower. You'll be gasping for air that this world doesn't offer because it is foreign territory. See our life source comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. God gives us life and life more abundantly through His Holy Spirit. Thank you, God, for giving us your Holy Spirit to live inside of us each day.

Words of Wisdom:

- Earthly wisdom is doing what comes naturally. Godly wisdom is doing what the Holy Spirit compels us to do. Charles Stanley
- The presence of the Holy Spirit is the grounding of all Christian hopes. N/A
- Only the Holy Spirit of God transforms lives. N/A
- God will never direct us to be prideful, arrogant, and unforgiving, immoral or full of fear. We step into these things because we are insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit within us. Charles Stanley

Something to think about.

- If you're not being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who are you following?

Church Signs:

- Searching for a new look? Have your faith lifted here!
- Sign broken. Message inside this Sunday.
- Come work for the Lord. The work is hard, the hours are long, and the pay is low. But the retirement benefits are out of this world.
- If you're headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns.

Steve Williams is the Pastor of Berry Chapel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13



Evergreen Church

Running a Tight Ship

By John McCoury
Roan Mountain Tennessee

Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure; the sail is not spread. -Isaiah 33:23. Have you seen pictures of sailboats leaning so far over they seem to be on the brink of overturning? Only those who have experienced the exhilaration of speeding over the waves as the wind cuts through tightly trimmed sails can appreciate the seemingly precarious way a boat sails at its optimum potential. Of course, even the finest yachts will be useless if not skillfully sailed. It's easy to see how Isaiah would describe God's wayward not skillfully sailed. It's easy to see how Isaiah would describe God's wayward People as a floundering boat. In their relationship to God, they were fearful at the sight of the first threatening wave, lackadaisical when the winds of fortune were calm, and ceaselessly careless when dangers lurked just beneath the surface. They seemed always to be lost at sea—on course, then off; off course, then on. Given their lack of seaworthiness, it is amazing they stayed afloat at all! Even now, those who are fearful of committing themselves to God will often abandon crucial spiritual "rigging" at the first sign of the boat tipping.

It takes trust and faith to believe that God's boat sails best when this world's values are almost upside down! The lazy mariner will not bother to unfurl the written Word. But without biblical knowledge to catch the fair breezes of the Holy Spirit, this ship is going nowhere! Most critical of all—careless sailors won't even notice dangerous doctrinal defects in the mast of faith on which all else hangs.

This powerful nautical imagery, intended as a rebuke to Israel, is a call for us to reexamine our own state of spiritual seaworthiness. The question for sailors on life's sea is: Am I leaning in trust with my sails trimmed tightly into the wind or drifting aimlessly lack of faith? When we mention the name "Titanic" false confidence immediately springs to mind. "Unsinkable you say? Apparently not! Yet given the technology of her time, there was every reason for the extraordinary confidence in that grand lady of the seas. However, there was also a significant amount of arrogance involved. Seen more clearly in persons than in ships, there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. But there is no fine line between confidence and lack of confidence. How often do we hear someone described either as "exuding confidence" or "lacking confidence"? How would you describe yourself? Are you by nature a confident person or one who is never quite sure of yourself? Strangely enough, the key to a healthy self-confidence is not having self-confidence! At least not having an overabundance of self-reliance. In 2 King 18:19-20 The reason Hezekiah could be so confident of victory over the more powerful forces of Assyria was that his reliance was not in himself, nor in his troops or weapons, but in God. And it was that supra-human confidence that Sennacherib didn't understand. Had he not conquered every other nation he'd attacked without the least resistance from their Gods? So, when he taunted Hezekiah for having false confidence, the irony is that it was Sennacherib himself whose confidence lacked foundation. The key to genuine confidence is not subjective, but objective. No matter how confident I might feel, there remains the possibility that I cannot withstand whatever lurking "icebergs" float into my life. But with God as my protector, there is no "iceberg" big enough to sink my ship. In that, I have complete confidence! The Titanic question is: Do I Have a good reason for myself confidence (or perhaps a bad reason for my lack of it)?

John McCoury is pastor of Evergreen church in Roan Mountain, Tennessee and also chaplain at Roan Highlands Nursing Center.



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Back to School

Approved Caldwell County Schools 2019-2020 Academic Calendar

First Day of School: August 26, 2019 Last Day of School: June 5, 2020

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
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McDowell County Schools 2019-2020 Academic Calendar

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2019-2020 YCS Calendar

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by Michelle Barrier Burke County



For most students and teachers, as I write this article at the end of July, going back to school is not something they want to talk about yet. I have to say, though, that I am one of those rare teachers that gets bored in the summer and can't wait to get back to school. I spend the majority of my summer break either working on lesson plans, finding new materials to make my lessons engaging, or attending classes and workshops to make me a more informed teacher. I love lots of things about school, but I especially love being around my students and getting to know them. As the school year ends each year, I am just beginning to understand all their quirks and have learned so much about them on a personal level. And then the final bell rings for summer break and they are gone. I miss them like crazy and pray for them every day - that they are happy, healthy, and safe when they are away from me and our school in the summer.

It won't be long before that first bell of the new school year will ring, and our students will be back in the classroom. Walmart and Dollar Tree already have their school supplies out and it makes me itchy to buy shiny, new school supplies! As an elementary school teacher, I would like to ask you to do a few things for me (and your child's teacher) this year.

- Try your best to attend your child's Open House and Meet the Teacher night - this gives your child a HUGE sense of relief to know exactly who to look for on the first day.
 - Please do not go out and buy lots of school supplies before you see the actual list from your child's teacher. Yes, stores like Walmart do have lists from your school. However, if they are like my school, that list is very generic and covers four 4th grade classrooms. What one teacher in 4th grade may really want you to have or not have may be very different from another 4th-grade teacher in the same building.
 - Be generous if you are financially able. There are students that will not bring anything to school from the supply list, and teachers will have to fund those supplies out of their pocket. If you are able, buy a little extra and donate those items to a classroom.
 - Your child's teacher wants your child to be as successful as you do! Start out the year on a positive note with that teacher and show your child that you are a team and want to work together for your child's success!
 - Lastly, I would ask that you PRAY for your child, your child's teacher, and his/her school. Commit to praying for something different each month. Perhaps this month it will be that the new school year will open without any problems and that your child will have a caring, compassionate teacher that loves to teach and learn! Maybe next month you could pray for the administration at your child's school or the Cafeteria staff. Any and all prayers would be fabulous! And, if you do not have a child in school, I would love it if you would pray for me and my students at Gamewell Elementary!
- I hope that all students, teachers, and parents have a fantastic rest of the summer and a wonderful opening of the 2019-2020 School Year!

Michelle is a 4th grade teacher in Caldwell County. She attends Pleasant Hill Baptist Church.

MITCHELL COUNTY SCHOOLS 2019-2020 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

AUGUST 2019	SEPTEMBER 2019	OCTOBER 2019	NOVEMBER 2019
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2019-2020 YCS Calendar

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Burke County Public Schools 2019-2020 School Calendar

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Notes from "The Shire; Avery County"

By Nancy Malik
Avery County



My husband and I moved to "The Shire; Avery County" (the shire is described as a small but beautiful, idyllic and fruitful land, beloved by its inhabitants), over two years ago. It reminded us of the lovely meadows, tall mountains, flower gardens and families that were a part of a special place in a mythical novel. Our coming here was at a very tender time in our lives as he was in the middle of cancer. But he revived for a number of months and passed with a smile on his face as He left this earth to go to the eternal home of homes!

We were called to Avery County. Before we knew where God was leading us, the place we were looking for was a "Safe Place." As we began to tend to our lovely place on a creek and meet people here, our hearts were blessed by families, many churches and a common thread of believers here in the High Country of North Carolina. That was an unexpected joy and after over four decades of living as far north, west, south, and east as possible in the US, the only place we found this common denominator was here in Avery County, the love for the Lord Jesus! A very "safe place"!

We found out that Avery County is the 100th county of North Carolina, created from five bordering neighbor counties. With the highest county seat, ski area, town and lowest gorge east of the Mississippi, we knew it was a very special place. We met and married in a county with the county seat at 10,000 feet; highest elevation ski area in the USA and lots of snow. Hearing all these facts for Avery County was special indeed. Then to find out about the Christmas Tree farms everywhere up here further excited us as Martin Luther's Christmas Tree, a symbol of the eternal Christian life, were being sent out all over the country, which added to the blessings found here.

Another bonus has been all the heart-shaped rocks found on our property and in the creek! Others have found them around the county as well! God truly loves these high mountains and shows it!

Dear Avery County, we have a lovely Christian newspaper sent out every month for free throughout our county. In the middle of the paper is a Bits and Pieces section which contains news for churches, communities and ministries listed by county. What a special events calendar for all our localities!

Please consider becoming a part of this beautiful herald of the Good News throughout the Blue Ridge High Mountains of North Carolina and the counties that includes. I know for my husband and myself we learned many new businesses (and used them) from the paper, church events and wonderful articles of truth within the pages of Blue Ridge Christian News. Avery County, there are so many things happening here with impact to many. God bless you, Each and Every One! Please consider taking part in this monthly messenger and God Bless the people who make this all possible.

I wrote this article from my heart for this lovely paper. No one asked me to take this on...I believe in it that much!

Nancy Malik, learning how to be a widow, walking closer with the Lord and reaching out to the body of Christ of the High Country to come out of the church buildings and recognize our relationship to one another through Christ! Tommy Burleson said it so well last summer at Singing on the Mountain, "Avery County Churches, come out of your buildings and together as the body of Christ!" (Tommy said it so much better than that, but the meaning is so rich!)

Nancy Malik and her husband moved to Avery County in 2017. Her husband passed in 2018. She is a member of Heaton Christian Church. Nancy taught preschool, elementary school and middle school over many years. She is the grandmother of eight!

When Should You Pay Taxes on Retirement Savings?

By Steve Gaito
McDowell County



The answer depends on how diversified your retirement strategy is and how well your combined accounts, from your 401(k) to your Social Security, work together to manage your tax burden. The primary benefits of a 401(k) are the compounded earnings on your savings and the potential tax savings. You fund your retirement with income that is tax-deferred to take advantage of the presumably lower tax rates at retirement age. But many people don't realize the overall implications of these contributions. Many think they'll be in a lower tax bracket during retirement by default.

The truth is that any amount withdrawn from a 401(k) or similar plan during retirement is taxed just like the income you receive while you're working. Contributing to a 401(k) with pre-tax income minimizes the amount of taxes you pay now, but you could end up in a higher tax bracket than you expected during retirement which could negate your current tax savings.

Retirement savings with a 401(k) and similar plans are taxed later (deferred), while other retirement vehicles are taxed annually or rarely taxed at all. Understanding how different retirement income is taxed is essential for creating a diversified portfolio for a retirement that provides flexibility and minimizes your tax burden:

- Taxed Annually-Investment brokerage accounts and some other savings accounts that produce interest, dividends, and capital gains are always taxed annually.
- Taxed Later-Savings accounts like a 401(k) are taxed upon withdrawal and hard assets like real estate are taxed when a capital gain is realized.
- Taxed Rarely-Roth IRAs, interest from municipal bonds, and certain types of life insurance are rarely taxed.

The obvious difference between these tax scenarios is when you incur the taxes. The less evident factors like future tax brackets and the amounts you withdraw from different accounts can mean the difference for creating a sound financial future. The best way to take advantage of all the factors is to diversify among a variety of accounts to fund your retirement. Understanding the nuances of different retirement funds, the cumulative tax implications, and how different accounts work together to minimize your tax obligation is critical for getting the best ROI for your retirement savings.

A CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional can help you take a comprehensive approach to your retirement strategy to decrease your overall tax burden and make the most of your retirement resources. Your retirement planner will show you how to reach your short- and long-term financial goals for more total savings over a longer period to build the retirement you deserve. Join forces with a CFP® practitioner to secure your financial future.

Steven W Gaito is a certified financial planner, owner of Faith Based Health Care and Retirement Resource Management, National Speaker on the topic of Social Security optimization, quoted in national publications like Money Magazine, US News and World Reports and Fox Business. Loves to educate and teach on financial topics like taxation of retirement accounts, long term care, healthcare, and efficient savings plans for small businesses. Has provided financial planning for missionaries through the International Mission Board.



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Trips for August

- Friday, Aug. 9th - Marion Trift Stores & lunch @ Smokey Ques BBQ-Marion, NC
- Friday, Aug. 23rd - Strawberry Hill-Chesnee, SC
- Friday, Aug. 30th - Cracker Barrell for Brunch-Asheville, NC

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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Thanks
By David Burleson
Burke County



As the 2018/2019 year comes to a close, the Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) has many reasons to give thanks. Our ministry has been able to complete renovations to our food pantry, welcome center, showers, and storage areas. A huge thank you goes to Roofing Brothers for the outstanding work they did. With the support and work of Lawrence Camp, BUCM has taken a huge step in becoming "paperless". This automation has saved us time and money. BUCM has truly been blessed this year with an incredible staff and wonderful opportunities. Without these two groups, our ministry would cease to exist. We have also been able to establish new partnerships and forge new relationships as well as strengthening our existing community partnerships.

- These blessings are perfect examples of what can be accomplished when a community works together. BUCM continues to be blessed with wonderful supporters and volunteers. Because of our community's support, BUCM has been able to meet the needs of our Burke County Neighbors in the following areas:
- A total of 78,940 individuals representing 36,722 households received services
 - Soup Kitchen served 75,665 meals (Adult – 72,109, Children – 3,556)
 - Food Pantry distributed 1,080,029 pounds of food to 22,766 individuals
 - Clothing Closet provided 5,568 Individuals with clothing valued at \$105,849.59 (over 600 children were assisted with back to school items with a grant from the Burke Youth Opportunity Philanthropists of the Community Foundation and the Burke United Way.)
 - Senior Santa brought cheer to 170 individuals
 - Wood Ministry provided loads of wood to 62 individuals
 - Baby Bucks Ministry provided 326 young children with diapers and wipes valued at \$ 1,808 along with 18 Better Start Baby Bags. (This assistance was made possible through the diaper closet at St. Matthews Methodist Church and by the support of Morganton First Methodist Church and the Burke Women's Fund)
 - Volunteers gave 43,490.75 hours valued at \$1,066,038.02
 - Homeless Assistance Provided
 - Homeless Supplies - 551 Individuals received materials valued at \$10,145.50
 - Laundry Vouchers – 500 (Thanks Hunter's Laundry Mat of Your Support)
 - Rain Hill Shower Kits -
 - Showers - 1,990
 - Crisis Financial Assistance Provided
 - Cooling - \$35,049.28
 - Heating - \$29,189
 - Rent - \$36,799.93

- Utilities - \$33,692.01
 - Food Pantry - \$47,711
 - Soup Kitchen - \$56,055.92
 - Total Community Assistance - \$238,496.85
- As evidenced by the statistics above, Burke County is a caring and supportive place to live and work.

On June 29, BUCM held our second annual golf tournament, Chipping for Change, at Silver Creek Plantation. The tournament would not have been possible without the work of Ms. Haven Worley who put this very successful tournament together for BUCM. A big thank you also to Terry Rogers and his staff at Silver Creek Plantation for all their help and support. Without our sponsors, the tournament could not have been the success it was. We are greatly appreciative of the following full sponsors:

- Wendy B's
- Food Lion
- Chic-fil-a
- Pepsi
- Country Side BBQ
- Grey & Betty Carswell
- James Tool Machine and Engineering (2 Holes)
- Carbon City Body Shop
- Carolina Health Care System Blue Ridge
- Boggs, Crump & Brown PA
- Larry McMahon & Rob Denton
- Toni Powers
- Mobile Services
- AJ's Steak House
- Small & Martin
- Hidden Valley Venue

Our half hole sponsors were:

- Riverside Golf and RV Park
- Catawba Company
- Nationwide (Kelly Messenhiemer & Keith Bowers)
- Burke Bedding

A big thanks to our hole in one sponsors:

- Case Farms
- Ricky Bristol
- Mark Buff

With the high summer demand for additional food, the funds raised from the golf tournament will be used to meet this summer's demands in the soup kitchen and food pantry.

Burke United Christian Ministries extends gratitude to the grocery stores and restaurants that we harvest from weekly. Food Harvesting may seem like an interesting term to you, so let us share our definition with you: Going to local grocery stores and restaurants to pick up items that are nearing their sell-by date or are leftovers to be donated to our ministry. These items include, but are not limited to fresh produce, meat, bread, desserts, pizza, soup, and frozen food. Some of our partnerships with stores are through Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina. We appreciate all of the places that allow BUCM to Food Harvest from, including: Food Lion at Fiddlers Run, Food Lion on Fleming Drive, Food Lion on Bost Road, Food Lion on Burkemont Avenue, Food Lion on Main Street in Valdese, Walmart Super Center, Walmart Express, Little Caesars' Pizza, Pizza Hut of Morganton and Valdese, The Pie Hole, Moon Dog, Timberwoods, Abele's Family Restaurant, Yianni's Restaurant and Panera Bread. Consider supporting these stores and restaurants as gratitude for their generous donations.

We, at the Burke United Christian Ministries, believe our volunteers, sustaining churches and community members are essential to our mission if we are to meet the needs of the diverse group of clients we serve. It is my prayer that each of our churches would make a commitment to provide support to our clients. If any church, Sunday School Class or individual would like to donate or volunteer, we would love for you to do that. We are so appreciative to our churches and community members whose support makes BUCM possible.

As we have stated many times, our ministry is stronger because of the support and participation of our volunteers, board, and staff. A special thank you to the following retiring board members:

- Mr. Brad Arrowood
- Mr. J. Mark Rostan

More than anything, I ask for your prayers for me and for our ministry that we would make Godly and wise decisions. I also ask that you pray that our clients not only be provided the resources they need but also, that we would be Christian role models for their lives.

I want to personally thank our churches for their leadership in our community. Our faith community is very important to me and I believe that to develop a strong ministry that meets the needs of others, we need to involve our faith community in every way possible. For too long, organizations around our country have separated themselves from the churches. I believe we need to welcome the influence of our churches and godly individuals into our community organizations in any way possible.

Again, thank you for your support of Burke United Christian Ministries and for your efforts to help those in our community. Thank you for all you do for our community, and I look forward to working with you in the future. Feel free to call me at (828) 433-8075 or email me at bucmdirector@gmail.com if you any questions or suggestions.

Thank You!

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries

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www.brcnews.com August 2019 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 44

"A Tug of Compassion"

By Christy Young
Mitchell County

Lately, my heart has been heavy for the needs of my community. As I look around, I see a wide-open mission field. A community filled with needs that can only be met with a compassionate heart. So what is compassion? The dictionary defines compassion as; a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering. In order to convey compassion, we must develop a deep love and concern; and have a desire to meet the needs of those suffering. What triggers our desire to help? It should flow from our understanding of who God is, our obedience, trust in, and gratitude for what He has done for us. 1 Peter 3:8 says, "Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble." Our lives, our hearts, our minds should be motivated by who we are in Christ and nothing else. True compassion comes as a result of pouring out our lives to God. The trials that we all face give us the strength to help in the lives of others that are facing tribulations. Although our troubles seem to be heavy, with faith, we can be usable vessels to help others. Compassion is not bringing our own needs, sympathies, or agendas but identifying with others and helping them become closer to Christ. We must reflect Christ's love in all things we do. I often find myself compassionate for those who have lost loved ones, struggling financially, broken families, children in need, etc. But, how much compassion do we have for the lost? Those struggling throughout this sinful world without the power source, without our Savior, Jesus. They are really hurting, in need, and in desperation. We as Christians should have deep compassion for the lost. We should have a burden to pray for lost souls, be bold in sharing the good news, and live a life that reflects our Savior. We all become cold and develop a sense of thoughtlessness throughout the seasons of our lives. But, we live in a time that we must convey the light of Jesus and have a deep burden for the unsaved. Search your heart, remember the outpouring of love that God has freely given you, and respond to the suffering in this world with a tug of compassion.

Christy Young is the blessed wife of Chris Young and proud mother of Hunter and Holden. She is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, bookkeeper at Young, Miller & Gillespie, PA, and a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church.

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. Psalms 28:7



By Carol Layton

Senior Adult Ministry Regional Leadership Gatherings North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry's upcoming Regional Leadership Gatherings will focus on the epidemic of loneliness among older adults: the causes, how to recognize it, and more importantly, how the church can provide the solution by offering connection, community, and a relationship with Christ.

The events will feature special speakers, Whitney Brook, and Mark Smith. Brooks and Smith are each NCBAM Advisory Team members and are serving on a planning committee for NCBAM's newest outreach, One Hope. Currently a pilot program within the Liberty Baptist Association, the outreach will eventually be released statewide. The mission of One Hope is to provide a spiritual response to the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness by connecting the lonely to churches and ultimately, to Christ.

Whitney Brooks is an integrative health coach at Grace, Wit & Wonder. She will share insights on the importance of purpose, the power of connection, and the many health risks associated with isolation and loneliness.

Mark Smith is a senior consultant for the Baptist State Convention. He will explore the role of the church in addressing loneliness as well as devotional resources from NCBAM and the BSC.

Each gathering will also include music, regional highlights, and round-table discussions. The cost of each leadership gathering is \$10 and includes lunch. To reserve your space, visit www.ncbam.org/aaaim or call 877.506.2226.

Carol Layton is Office and Support Manager for North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM)



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Humor

By Buddy Freeman
Madison County



Laughter is Healthy for you:

One thing a preacher should remember for sure: "The mind can absorb only what the seat can endure."

One father asked his preschool son busy with his blocks, "What are you building son?" The little boy said, "I am building a church. We need to be very quiet." The father asked, "Why do we have to be quiet?" The boy said, "the people are asleep."

A mother said, "My two daughters were having a discussion about family resemblance. The nine-year-old said, "But I have Dad's eyes and Dad's lips." The six-year-old said, "And I look just like Dad, but I have light hair." Then she turned to me and asked, "Mom, what does Dad have to do with us being born anyway?" Her older sister said, "Don't be stupid, Christian, Dad is the one who drove Mom to the hospital."

A doctor told a discharged patient, "You're completely cured. I must tell you; it was your incredible will to survive that saved you." The patient replied, "Thanks, Doc. Remember that when you write up my bill."

A woman at an upscale supermarket asked an employee, "Is this milk fresh?" The employee replied, "Mam, three hours ago it was grass."

Dr Buddy Freeman is now serving as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Marshall, NC.

Social Media App Designed to Unite Christians

By Chris Maxwell



Various groups work diligently to unite Christians. By hosting events to be attended by people of different locations, denominations, ages, and nationalities, ministries push for harmony in today's often divided church.

Elaine Beck realized that can happen by not just meeting in a geographical location or on a particular date or a single webcast. In today's hi-tech world, she grasped the reality that people can be together even when they aren't.

"I thought, okay, God, now I see it," Elaine said. "We needed a social media account for Christians. It started when God put in my heart the need to bring all the Christians together."

From that inspiration, Blessings Through Action began. The social media app for Christians, Our Action Place, is a way of seeing Elaine's dream come true.

Blessings Through Action seeks to remind Christians of these two questions:

- How can we come together to build a common framework for all Christians to support one another, support our leaders, and respect the will of our Heavenly Father?

- How can we bring more Americans to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and with those new Christians build a better, stronger and more faithful America?

The two questions can be answered, Elaine believes, "as all Christians come together."

She and her team offer ways to bring the followers of Christ together online. They believe the app is practical—and today's best method of uniting people while offering important information.

Blessings Through Action seeks to find these answers through "All Christians Together In Our Nation," sharing many voices as one voice.

"Together we can respond to what happens on the national stage and move together to make changes for the better," Elaine said. "We want to be sure our voices are heard. And we plan to develop communities that better reflect the Christian principles our nation was founded on."

The website and app are safe for teenagers. Blessings Through Action hopes to meet teenagers and college students where they are. The Our Action Place app includes Christian Daily News, providing a healthy view of what is happening in the United States.

For those seeking to download the app, "Everything is free," Elaine says. "You sign up and you will learn all you need to know on the web page. You can talk and read about the nation's strengths and weaknesses, and what we need to do for God instead of doing it man's way. This is a means to talk to the nation about the truth, what God says about abortion, what he says about loving him and doing what's right in all avenues in our country. We have an 'action of the day' where somebody says what they think is an action to take. It could be something like calling your mother and thanking her one more time about all of her specific actions, or something like sending an encouraging note to a friend."

Showing God's love and speaking out about the bigger questions are key parts of what Blessings in Action seeks to do. They contend that too many of today's outlets leave God out, and they hope to change that. Or, at least, to offer a biblical perspective even when audiences are hurried for quick, brief information. They bring the avenue for audiences to obtain and provide information themselves.

"If you download our site on our action place, you can include an article to share with other people," said Elaine. "Or, if it's a bigger article, you could send to us and then we can put it on blessingsthroughaction.org in our Christian News feed. We need to give Christians the power to communicate in social media and apps like this one."

For youth ministries, mission organizations, and Christian schools, Blessings in Action can continue conversations from services and small group gatherings.

Elaine recently read comments from readers who felt new hope through a story a young lady wrote on Blessings in Action. She thought of how multitudes need to read those types of stories. With determination, she plans to invite more people to read—and write—stories of hope and truth. The lady's inspiring words confirmed to Elaine that their app is needed, and that people can provide fitting stories for the platform.

"God is asking us to do this because he wants people in this nation to no longer step aside and be shoved out of the way," she said. "Our voices need to be heard."

Learn more at <https://blessingsthroughaction.org>.

The Our Action Place app is available from the Apple and Android stores.

Chris Maxwell served as lead pastor for 19 years and has worked as Director of Spiritual Life at Emmanuel College for the last 13 years. He speaks around the world in churches, conventions, and epilepsy events. He has written nine books, including *Underwater*—his story about epilepsy—and his most recent book, *a slow and sudden God: 40 years of wonder*.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7



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